

Northwest *palate*

FOOD, WINE & TRAVEL OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

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CULINARY TREASURES

A GUIDE TO
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Best Wines
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Cooking for Kids: A Recipe for Success

By Cole Danehower

The stories of kids in need can be heart-breaking, yet the help that Morrison Child and Family Services in Portland provides is heartwarming—thanks in large part to the support of area restaurants and wineries.

Morrison, a 61-year old organization, provides mental health and child welfare services that have a powerful positive impact on the lives of children and their families. Morrison's programs are designed to integrate with the entire lives of kids and meet their evolving needs. Each year Morrison helps approximately 6,000 children lead better lives.

An important way they fund their work is Cooking for Kids—one of the most successful examples of a food and wine fundraising collaboration in the Northwest, if not the nation. Now entering its 13th year, Cooking for Kids pairs more than 30 of Oregon's finest restaurants and chefs with local wineries and winemakers in a seven-month series of fundraising dinners.

"What touches me more than anything else is the involvement these restaurants and wineries have with their community," says Lauren Tietsort, Donor Relations Director for Morrison. "The chefs donate all their food and time and supplies, plus their space and waitstaff, and the winemakers donate their wine and their time—some drive hours just to be sure that they are at the dinners personally."

One winemaker in particular, says Tietsort, embodies the kind of commitment the culinary community contributes. "The one that always stuns me is Earl Jones," she says. "He drives three hours up from Southern Oregon to personally attend his dinner, brings his wine and generously pours it for everyone, then he turns around and drives back home after the dinner—and he's been doing this for eight years!"

"They're good people, and they do good work," says Jones, whose Abacela winery in Roseburg is always a big draw for Cooking for Kids dinner reservations. "The kinds of things they do for kids in the community, well, it's extremely important for the kids who can benefit, but it really is important for everyone. We're always happy to participate and support Morrison."

It is this spirit of giving back to the community that drives Portland's food and wine community—people with heavy demands on their time and an overabundance of requests for donations—to give up so much for Morrison.

"Both my wife and I were fortunate to grow up in strong, supportive families," says restaurateur and chef Adam Berger, owner of Portland's Ten01, Tabla, and Nutshell restaurants, "but there are a lot of kids today—too many of them—that don't have that advantage and are, in fact, victims of neglect and abuse...and at young ages where they aren't really able to cope or help themselves. They live in my community, they are my kids' peers. Without programs like Morrison, they'd have no support, no way out."

Founded in 1947 by Dr. Carl Morrison, Oregon's first board-certified child psychologist, Morrison today provides a continuum of services for children and their families from birth to age 18. Children can suffer from family abuse, substance abuse, neglect, mental health issues, and any number of traumas that, without Morrison's help, they would have no way of effectively managing.

Morrison's programs are innovative, integrated closely into the lives of the children they help, and carefully tracked and developed through a unique program evaluation process. Not merely providing a single service and leaving it at that, Morrison builds multi-disciplinary teams of professionals that work to meet the entire range of children's needs, including mental and physical health, early childhood care, parent education, and a case management model that supports the kids over time and as their needs evolve.

Such work is expensive, and Cooking for Kids is one of the most effective ways Morrison has of educating the community about their programs and raising funds—more than \$120,000 annually. Because of their low overhead and the generosity of the restaurants and wineries, all of the funds raised through the dinners go directly to programs.

"I'm in the business of nourishing people," says Berger, summing up the feelings of many of the culinary contributors, "and

Morrison is in the business of nourishing kids and families, teaching them to be self-sufficient and helping them learn to be more successful in life. I love participating in that. I love knowing I can help. I'm really passionate about doing that. I wish more people would step up and help, too."

To learn more about Morrison Child and Family Services and Cooking for Kids, visit morrisonkids.org. ►



PHOTOS COURTESY MORRISON

Chefs and winemakers willingly donate time and products to Cooking for Kids. (Above) Chef Tommy Habetz demonstrates the preparation of one of his signature dishes for attendees at a Cooking for Kids dinner. (Below) Susan Neel, marketing manager for Washington's acclaimed McCrea Cellars talks about food and wine pairing at a Cooking for Kids dinner.