

FOOD

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2009

F6 WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 2009

THE WASHINGTON POST



Shown left, Washington chef José Andrés (center) and Joan Nathan, shown right, New York chef Lidia Bastianich.

Chefs Descend on Washington To Cook Meals With a Message

DINNERS, Page F7

BY JANE BLACK



BY JAMES M. THRESEHER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

White House pastry chef Bill Yosses, left, talks with chef-restaurateurs Daniel Boulud and Alice Waters at Washington author Joan Nathan's dinner for those cooking the benefit banquets.

Meals With a Message

By JANE BLACK
Washington Post Staff Writer

Atlanta chef Scott Peacock was busy preparing a traditional Southern dinner for 40 on Sunday afternoon. He had worked lard into flour for his famous ham biscuits. A giant pot of smoked pork stock was simmering to braise collard greens.

Then his cellphone rang. The Saudi Arabian ambassador and several Jews who keep kosher would be coming to the benefit dinner he was serving the next night at a private home in Northwest Washington. Their religions prohibit pork, which fig-

ured into nearly every one of his dishes. Peacock sighed and turned to the kitchen TV, where Barack Obama was speaking after the inaugural concert: "In these monuments are chiseled those unlikely stories that affirm our unyielding faith, a faith that anything is possible."

"I just hope that this dinner will be possible," Peacock quipped. Then he got back to work.

The dinners that Peacock and 11 others from around the country volunteered to cook on Monday night were expected to

See DINNERS, Page F6



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Priorities for the President

The 12 "Art, Food, Hope" dinners held in the Washington area Monday raised money for local food organizations D.C. Central Kitchen, Martha's Table and FreshFarm Markets. The events also intended to put food on the political agenda. Here's a look at the chefs, their dishes and the priorities they suggest for the Obama administration.

CHEF, RESTAURANT	SAMPLE MENU ITEM	FOR THEIR WISH LIST
 José Andrés SANTITAS • Washington	Slow-roasted suckling pig from PolyFACE Farm with carrots and Brussels sprouts	"A secretary of food is vital. If we take care of food, we take care of farmers."
 Dan Barber BLUE HILL • New York	Stone Barns farm egg with brussels, carrots and green-onion greens	"If the president wants to deal with energy independence, the state of nutrition and the environmental crisis, he needs to see the connection between the way our food is raised and the land is used."
 Lidia Bastianich FELICIA • New York	Meatloaf with duck pancreas	"We should support and encourage small farmers so that nutritious, sound and safe foods are accessible to all the people in America, not just for the elite."
 Rick Bayless FRONTIERA GRILL • Chicago	Tortilla soup of roasted tomatoes, avocado chili peppers, marjoram, mushrooms and local cheese	"[The Obama] eat good, fresh, healthy food all the time. And they've said, 'They could set an example... that I think could make a bigger impact than trying to legislate' specific food policy."
 Daniel Boulud DANIEL • New York	Maryland crab salad with green apple garnish and celery root remoulade	"We need better traceability of ingredients. It's important we know where food comes from and how it's produced."
 Tom Colicchio CRAB • New York	Roasted Bay scallops with celery and black trumpet mushrooms	"I would like mandatory disclosure on all genetically modified food."
 Floyd Cardoz TABLE • New York	Cook cake with poppyseed, Guano jalapeño salad and caramelized chili-pepper	"We need to improve the quality of meals served in schools, with an emphasis on healthy, minimally processed, locally sourced ingredients."
 Joan Nathan COOKBOOK AUTHOR • Washington	Apricot chicken with olives and preserved lemons	"We need a policy that pushes sustainability... Why not redirect some subsidies for soy, cotton and corn and create an incentive program to help farmers grow more healthy, sustainable and organic food?"
 Michel Nischan PRESSURE ROOM • Portland, Ore.	Pan-Fried angel food cake with quinoa compote and vanilla liqueur	"We should offer incentives to our farmers in all states to supply healthy, affordable food directly to our most vulnerable citizens increasingly using food stamps, WIC and reduced-cost school lunch programs."
 Scott Peacock WATERBURY RESTAURANT • Atlanta	Roasted Cedar Creek pork with yucca root potatoes, braised greens and slow-simmered okra soup	"Grow oranges on the lawn. As a matter of fact, I'll bet that the lawn and Rose Garden are heavily sprayed with nasty chemicals. If so, change it to pesticide-free flowers and fruits."
 Nancy Silverton OTTOMA • Los Angeles	Torta della nonna with tomatoes and pine nuts	"I'd like to see [the White House chef] take the emphasis off of so-called 'kooky' or 'quirky' food and put it on what's really important, that feeds and feeds the love to sit and not regret."
 Alice Waters CHEZ PANISSE • Berkeley, Calif.	Broccolini of local rockfish with root and herb salad	"My hope is that the White House itself becomes a symbol of sustainability that includes both food and the growing of it."