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LONG BEACH

Chefs feed those in need

3-course lunches are served to homeless people as part of early start to Black Restaurant Week

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The second annual Long Beach Black Restaurant Week got an early start Tuesday by giving those who are homeless an opportunity to try the food made by Black chefs and business owners.

The event served about 200 homeless men, women and children a three-course lunch at the Long Beach Rescue Mission, a nonprofit homeless shelter, according to organizers.

Female chefs also prepared breakfast and dinner for 60 residents at Lydia House, the mission's

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CHRISTINA MERINO — STAFF

Guests of the Long Beach Rescue Mission dine on a meal prepared by Black chefs and Black business owners ahead of the start of Black Restaurant Week in Long Beach.

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shelter for women and children.

“There are so many of our neighbors that will not get to dine out during Black Restaurant Week,” Terri Henry, executive director of the organization Long Beach Food & Beverage, said at the event. “So serving a gourmet meal to those struggling with homelessness is our way of bringing it to them, and the chefs love it. They love giving back to the community.”

Long Beach Black Restaurant Week will run Sunday through Jan. 29 and will celebrate African, African American and Caribbean food in and around the city. The eight-day event also seeks to highlight Black-owned culinary businesses, as well as Black chefs and bartenders, according to event organizer Long Beach Food & Beverage, a nonprofit dedicated to providing a platform for the city's restaurant community.

The kick-off event started early Tuesday morning at the Lydia House, with a gourmet breakfast for its residents. The meals were prepared and served by chef Melissa Ramsay and the team at Fresh off the Yacht Catering.

“Despite its size, Long Beach is a tightly knit community where diversity and civic pride is our strength,” Ramsay said in a statement. “My fellow chefs and I are excited to kick off Long Beach Black Restaurant Week by treating those most vulnerable in our city to some unforgettable meals.”

Lunch was prepared and served by chefs Ronnie Woods of Northtown Bistro Pop-up, Ahmad Butler of Miller-Butler, Quianna Bradley of A Pinch of Salt Catering, LaTanya Ward of Filthy Rich Banana Pudding and DeAndre Parks of Strong Beach Lemonade.

“I’m glad to be back doing it again, feeding these guys again,” said Woods, who participated in Black Restaurant Week last year. “I see some familiar faces from last year and it’s great. It’s Long Beach; it’s what we’re supposed to do, give back to the community.”

As guests were brought in, the hot meals were served with a glass of fresh lemonade from Parks.

“I’m born and raised in Long Beach and just giving back to Long Beach, I’m all with it,” said Parks, who eventually wants to turn his family-run lemonade business into a nonprofit to keep helping people in the community.

As guests put away their empty plates and headed out, they thanked the chefs

for sharing their food.

“It’s been awesome. (The chefs are) doing what they do best and everything they made was great,” Ruben Gutierrez, kitchen supervisor at Long Beach Rescue Mission, said during the event. “The men and the women really enjoyed it, and they’re really happy. I’m sure the outside guests are going to be excited about what they’re eating too.”

The rest of the Long Beach community will have the opportunity to try to support these and almost 30 other Black-owned restaurants, food trucks, caterers, bakeries, pop-ups and retail food businesses during Black Restaurant Week.

Businesses will offer discounted specials and special menu items. People are invited to dine in, take out, or have featured items delivered from restaurants or order from the websites of various home cottage businesses or pop-ups for pick-up.

Pop-up events will take place at Trademark Brewing, 233 E. Anaheim St., from 4:30-10 p.m. Tuesday and at The Cove Hotel, 200 E. Willow St., from 5-9 p.m. Jan. 26.

There are no tickets or passes required to participate.

For more information on businesses participating in Long Beach Black Restaurant Week, go to blackrestaurantweeklb.com.