

Chef David Keeps Meal Times Bold and Fresh During Pandemic

Tantalizing Tuscan pasta. Spicy Jamaican entrees. Creamy Irish coffee. These aren't just the dishes you can find on the menu at a fine dining establishment — Claremont Manor residents enjoy decadent meals like this every day in an atmosphere that brings the ambiance of a fine establishment to their homes and soon to the community's dining room.



Claremont Manor Executive Chef David Diaz

Claremont Manor's Executive Chef David Diaz knows how important a unique, well-prepared meal is for residents. From nights dedicated to different cuisines to cooking demos, David turns breakfast, lunch or dinner into a chance for residents to experience a culinary delight.

"Dining has always been a social experience for residents and staff. Enjoying a meal together is one of the best ways to engage with each other," said David, who started his career as a teacher before receiving culinary training at Cordon Bleu in Pasadena. After working at a high-end establishment in San Diego, he decided to bring his culinary skills and fine dining techniques to Claremont Manor.

For variety, David and his team dedicate one night of the week to a certain cuisine so residents can relish new experiences like savory Italian dishes and the rich, spicy sauces of traditional Jamaican cuisine. "I want to give residents a taste of some of the places they may not have been to and give them an idea of various cuisines around the world," David said. There's no need to travel the world to foster a sense of exploration at Claremont Manor. Weekly theme nights tantalize residents' taste buds and give them the chance to try something new.

David's creativity as a chef also comes into play when he's tapping into the experience of each cook on the team or fulfilling requests from residents. Residents who have fond memories of a specific dish from their childhood can bring their requests to David who will research and recreate the dishes they remember, whether it's a warm cookie their mother baked or a local favorite recipe. "I always like to take residents' input so they can have involvement in what they're eating."



The pandemic meant David and his team had to find creative ways to keep residents' spirits up during times the dining room was closed. Even when residents are eating in their residences, the dining team strives to bring more than just a meal but an experience that creates a special moment in time. To the dining services team, raising the bar for an exceptional experience includes personalized dining especially during holidays or special events like birthdays.

But meals aren't just about the food — laughter, good conversation and thoughtful toasts are equally important. Each of these moments makes up the ambiance of Claremont Manor's dining room. As in-person dining becomes a safer option, a small number of residents can enjoy lunch in the dining room with a special menu that aren't as easily delivered, from chopped salads tossed in a creamy dressing to savory meats and cheeses.

No matter what meal David is serving, he strikes the balance between nutritional concerns and taste. With bright fresh herbs, vinegar, and acidic citrus, David and his team can bring out the natural flavors of each dish without adding too much sodium. For residents who want to add extra flavor, they can request dishes that are customized for their own tastes and diet concerns. David and his team often share cooking techniques and tips with residents so if they choose to cook their own meals, those favorite dishes are more nutritious and tasty.

"We have great residents here and our team is awesome," David said. He knows how important food is for elevating each new day. So, settle into your table, relax with loved ones, and enjoy a tempting meal in Claremont Manor's dining room.