

# A Taste of the Cake™

Volume Twenty-Three

Winter 2007

## A Grand Debut At The Palazzo

By Michael Pereira-ADO

**A**s of Dec. 28, 2007, The Grand Lux Cafe Venetian has a new neighbor: the Grand Lux Cafe Palazzo! Only 200 yards away, the Grand Lux Palazzo is the anchor restaurant in the Venetian's new 50-floor luxury tower.

The 3,068-room Palazzo Casino Resort features a magnificent lobby with a 60-foot glass dome, multiple two-story fountains, a 105,000-square-foot casino, imported marble and a 270-unit condo tower. Of course, our new Grand Lux Palazzo is equally impressive, with nearly 20,000 square feet of lavish luxury.

The new restaurant's beautiful windows allow natural light to illuminate this palace, which overlooks Wynn Las Vegas. Seating capacity is 526 guests, including a state-of-the-art banquet facility of 72 seats, with a private bar service and buffet room. Newly designed lighting fixtures and chandeliers showcase the magnificent Grand Dining Room, designed by our own in-house designer, Development Department Project Manager **Teresa Kelly**. Other highlights include an island bar to wow guests as they enter the Grand Hallway and a kitchen with a full working bakery on an island next to the dining room.



Preparing for the "grandest" opening of the year are, from left to right: Alan Smith-EKM, Juan Rodriguez-Server, Esperanza Peirra-Line Cook, Aminidab Lykins-Bartender, Lorena Rojas-Senior Manager, Bruce Judy-Venetian GM, Elizabeth Jimenez Cano-Line Cook and Gerardo Jimenez-Line/Prep Cook.

Employing more than 400 staff members for its 20-hour-a-day operation, the Palazzo Grand Lux is open for breakfast daily at 6 a.m., with an a la carte menu and a newly designed express breakfast featuring delicious waffles. The adjacent retail bakery serves homemade pastries, coffee, and espresso drinks.

The restaurant is being guided by veteran GM **John Kulacki** and veteran EKM **Alan Smith**, the original EKM for the Venetian. The management team is 18 people strong, and opening during the busy holiday season. Here's to their first \$100,000 day!



# Virtual Success Story

By Rob West, Vice President-Technology Services & Restaurant Systems

**A**s a result of our innovative and cost-saving efforts during the recent HotSchedules rollout, The Cheesecake Factory IT team was honored with the 2007 FS/TECH Project Excellence award. This award was presented at the International Foodservice Technology Exposition and North American Association of Food Equipment Manufacturers show, held in October in Atlanta.

Improving the quality of life for our managers and staff members was the main focus of our decision to implement the HotSchedules scheduling solution. Our IT team, with the help of each restaurant's GM and H.E.R.O. (HotSchedules Educational Resource for Operations), trained more than 900 restaurant managers and 30,000 staff members in how to use this new tool and they created effective and consistent training materials.

The creation of these tools was a truly collaborative effort, with our IT department working closely with the HotSchedules team on everything from video scripting to determining content and visual requirements. While focusing on our **Value of High Performance**, our virtual implementation of HotSchedules resulted in a savings of approximately \$400,000, compared with our traditional approach of sending trainers to each restaurant. Thanks to everyone on the team for a job well done!

“The collaborative partnership HotSchedules has built with The Cheesecake Factory has helped to drive many of our development initiatives beyond initial expectations, and I credit the success of this rollout to the project management and execution of The Cheesecake Factory team... we are confident that the hard work on behalf of The Cheesecake Factory corporate employees, training team members and store managers will pay off quickly in terms of a better scheduling environment and reduced costs associated with staff scheduling.”

- Ray Pawlikowski, President, HotSchedules Inc.



Cheesecake Factory IT and HotSchedules team representatives are, from left to right: Edmund Reeh-Manager, Operations Technology Development; Rob West-Vice President, Restaurant Systems & Technology Services; HotSchedules representatives: Justin Buckley-Director of Technical Services; David Cantu-Director of Sales; Casey Clinkenbeard-Director of Operations (Not pictured: Ray Pawlikowski-President).



## SPAM—Not Just A Canned Meat

Here's how our IT department and fire-wall/spam filter protects our CCF computers every day:

- Up to 20,000 messages are received company-wide each day
- 91.4% of them are SPAM
- 8.6% are legitimate
- .2% are false positive (and are sent to you through a "User Quarantine Release" e-mail)
- .1% slip through and end up in your in-box



# Restaurants of the Year:

## Vegas Keeps On Rolling

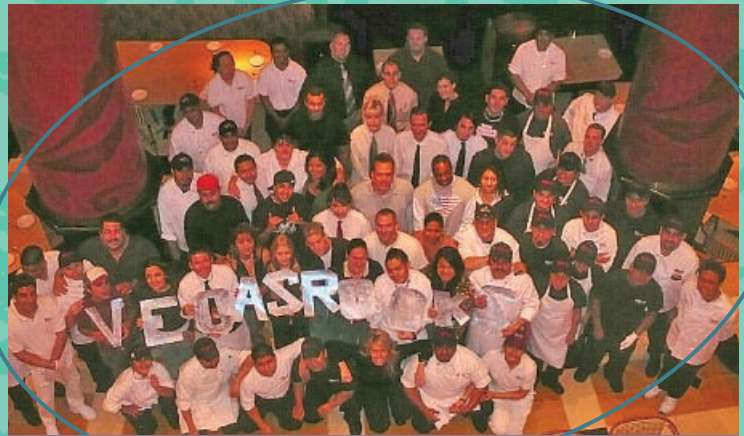
By David Gordon-RVP

**N**ominated twice, The Cheesecake Factory Restaurant of the Year for 2007 is the Las Vegas-Forum Shops! Even in its 10th year of operation, this restaurant continued to grow its sales—a half a million dollars in 2007!

What's the secret to this restaurant's success? One major factor is the culture established by GM Pam Johnson and EKM Andres Jimenez. The staff and managers are loyal and committed to our mission. They love their work, find opportunities to grow their careers, run amazing shifts, and are always having fun. Many successful leaders in our Company started their careers in Las Vegas working with Pam and Andres. The entire restaurant is never on "cruise control" and they strive to **Be the Best They Can Be** day in and day out. The results speak for themselves.

Pam, Andres, and their team continue to go out of their way to honor special guest and staff requests and **Do Whatever It Takes** to grow their business while building our brand. The Las Vegas Cheesecake Factory has embodied the character, personality and soul necessary to be the Restaurant of the Year in 2007.

We all know it's the staff that makes our restaurants special. Las Vegas continues to retain their staff at an amazing rate. These special staff members are the culture in Las Vegas—they care for their guests and each other and are the benchmark for our Company. Congratulations to the entire Las Vegas team!



Las Vegas rocks as The Cheesecake Factory Restaurant of the Year for 2007!



## Viva Venetian!

By Michael Pereira-ADO

**T**he Grand Lux Cafe Venetian is a restaurant that continues to amaze us year after year. Having recently eclipsed its eight-year anniversary, the team rang up over \$185 million in sales—and has earned the 2007 Restaurant of the Year award for the Grand Lux concept.

The staff at the Grand Lux Venetian run their restaurant the old-fashioned way. First, they take care of their people; second they plan, plan, plan; third they execute the plan; and lastly they provide a quality product for their guests with gracious hospitality.

The more than 435 staff members think and work like a family. With 25 original staff members and approximately 90 with more than five years of service, the Venetian boasts retention rates that are in the top five in the Company.

The leadership team members' hard work and dedication puts them side-by-side on the floor with the staff on every shift. They also consistently recognize and appreciate their staff and their families and treat everyone with respect.

Please visit your break room, check the bulletin board, or ask your OST to see a copy of this article in Spanish.

Visite por favor el cuarto asignado para descansos, vea la pizarra de anuncios, o pídale su OST una copia para ver este artículo en español.

From CTE honoree Lorena Rojas (Manager of the Year) to GMs Bruce Judy and Mark Rukas and EKMs Alan Smith and Chris Scarboro, they go about the business of taking care of each staff member and each guest, one at a time. Congratulations to the whole team!



The 2007 Grand Lux Restaurant of the Year, the Venetian has grown its business from \$18 million in its opening year to a projected \$28 million for 2008. This year, it is expected to drop over \$11 million to the bottom line—the equivalent of building two Cheesecake Factory restaurants!

# Mural, Mural On The Wall

By Sherry O'Neill-Charitable & Corporate Events Manager

**T**he Salvation Army Youth and Community Center, located in south Los Angeles in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the city, is a haven of support and safety for the children and families who live nearby. And recently, volunteers from The Cheesecake Factory Corporate Support Center, Calabasas Production Facility and our local Los Angeles-area restaurants helped bring color and life to this center with an inspiring mural.

On Saturday, Oct. 6, our Cheesecake Factory volunteers joined volunteers from Time Warner Cable and other organizations to paint an amazing jumbo-sized mural across the outside wall of the center.

"Unfortunately, the Youth Center was a well-kept secret, and we wanted the community to know exactly what we are doing," explains the center's Executive Director Mortimer Jones. "We took what is in the building and put it outside on the wall."



The Youth Center is the one safe, gang-free environment where neighborhood children and families can go to do homework, meet friends, participate in sports, receive tutoring and computer instruction, dance and play. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact **Sherry O'Neill**, our Foundation's Charitable & Corporate Events Manager, at (818) 871-3021.

Winter Park's charity committee Senior Manager Leo Papkalos, Star Server Adam Feldman and Star Bartender Michele Maisonet are the smiling faces in the center of the photo dressed in white Cheesecake Factory polo shirts.



## Charity & Hospitality Go Hand-in-Hand

By Michele Maisonet-Star Bartender and  
Leo Papkalos-Manager

**Earlier this year, several staff members at the Winter Park, Fla., Cheesecake Factory decided to help out an impoverished school in our area.**

For three weeks, the staff got together and collected money and much-needed supplies for 100 students. On the Friday before school started, we delivered all the donated items to Hungerford Elementary School. It was a pretty amazing sight—the kids were actually excited about going back to school! They were very appreciative and we all felt good that day knowing that we were able to make a difference.

Inspired by that experience, our group decided that it wanted to do more to **Represent Our Company**. So we started a charity committee that would find a cause to support every month. The committee, headed by Star Bartender **Michele Maisonet**, organized 30 walkers from the Winter Park and Orlando Cheesecake Factories for the American Cancer Society's "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" 5K walk in October.

In November, we joined the Company's efforts to help feed the homeless with our Thanksgiving Day Feast for The Salvation Army. And during the holidays in December, we'll be sending letters to our troops through "Soldiers Angels," a group that supports our nation's military men and women and provides comfort by sending letters and care packages to those deployed overseas. We look forward to continuing our community efforts!

# Giving Thanks

By Sherry O'Neill-Charitable & Corporate Events Manager

Writer and clergyman Henry Van Dyke once said that,

**“Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received, thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling, and Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse.”**

More than 2,300 Cheesecake Factory, Grand Lux Cafe and Corporate, Bakery and Development staff members, families and friends recently followed that impulse and **Represented Their Company** by preparing and serving traditional Thanksgiving feasts to nearly 5,000 Salvation Army guests.

On Thanksgiving Day, our team of “secret ingredients” (a.k.a. volunteers) arrived early in the morning to decorate, set up dining rooms and prepare meals in the kitchens of 10 Salvation Army centers, from Los Angeles to our nation’s capital. While servers dished up the food, the bakery, front desk and kitchen teams set tables, seated guests, sliced turkey, poured coffee and served pumpkin cheesecake to the crowds.

Special thanks go out to the regional and kitchen coordinators (representing over 80 restaurants!) who volunteered their time to plan and lead the events. Their dedication, leadership, and commitment to community service are what made this wonderful day possible.



## Denver Batting

# 1,000

By Rich Kues-Senior Manager

**Craig F. is no ordinary, regular guest at our Denver Cheesecake Factory. As of Sept. 12, 2007, he had dined at our restaurant for 1,000 consecutive days!**

Craig visits us every day—sometimes more than once a day! He began keeping track of the number of his visits since he first started eating at our location in December 2004.

A retired marketing director for a home-building company, Craig says he started coming to The Cheesecake Factory because it was the closest restaurant to his home (he lives across the street). “I realized I liked the diversity of the menu, and the hospitality of the staff is unparalleled,” he explains. He estimates that he spends \$30,000 per year with us (he often brings guests) and notes that he has lost weight since he started visiting our restaurant.

Craig is also a regular visitor to the cigar shop across the street. (Sept. 12 was his 1,000th visit there, as well.) To thank him for his loyalty, we treated him to a \$100 gift certificate to the cigar shop, a card signed by the staff and, of course, his scrambled-eggs lunch. Thank you, Craig, for being such a loyal guest. It’s a pleasure to serve you every day!



**Regular guest Craig F. poses with his favorite staff members**

## A Silver Celebration

**In keeping with the tradition we began last year, A Taste of the Cake is pleased to recognize those dedicated staff members who celebrated their silver anniversaries with The Cheesecake Factory in 2007. Congratulations to Max, Hector, Fidel and Jose, and thank you for 25 years of service!**



**(L to R) Jose Aguido-Busser, Beverly Hills Cheesecake Factory; Max Byfuglin-President, CFB; Hector Aguirre-Mixer, Calabasas Production Facility and Fidel Medrano-Crumb Blender, Calabasas Production Facility**

# 20 Years In The Kitchen

By Jeff Nemet-GM

**A**t Atlanta Prep Cook **Cleavon "Cleave" Belk** "has been around for so long that he bleeds Cheesecake Factory!" claims his GM Jeff Nemet. Cleave, who celebrated his 20-year anniversary Sept. 1, has trained dozens of Cheesecake Factory AKOMs, ADOs, GMs and EKM's.

To honor him, **Kix Nystrom, Donald Moore, Mark Pratte** and **Chef Bob Okura** sent him congratulatory gifts, not counting the camcorder that he selected as his Years of Service award. We also had a terrific celebration for him with 50 of his fellow staff members. We had a cake and went all out to make Cleave feel special.



Atlanta GM  
Jeff Nemet,  
Prep Cook  
Cleavon Belk and  
EKM Jesus  
Ramirez

Cleave is the embodiment of our value of **Integrity, Respect and Responsibility**; he is honest, treats others with respect and dignity, and honors our commitments and obligations. Because Cleave truly is a special man and has touched so many people in this Company, Sept. 1 is now "Cleave Day" in Buckhead!



AKOM  
Steve Leon and  
Southlake GM  
Morgan Page

**V**inny Forca and the team in south Florida also send a special congratulatory shout-out to AKOM **Steve Leon** for his 20 years of service with The Cheesecake Factory. We're all very proud of you Steve!

# Girl Power

By Chad Polesak-GM

**Back in 2001, Gina Bommarito was a young college student working at The Cheesecake Factory to pay the bills while studying for a degree in chemistry at Arizona State University. Six years later, she became the very first female EKM in the history of our Company!**

Gina started out as a line cook at our Chandler restaurant when it first opened. She had heard that The Cheesecake Factory was an up-and-coming business that was passionate about its food and guests, and she wanted to be a part of it. She was cross-trained on multiple stations and participated in several openings before becoming a kitchen manager in 2003.

After moving to Las Vegas, she spent the next three years at our Summerlin location focusing on **Achieving Excellence**. Earlier this year, Gina was promoted to Executive Kitchen Manager at our Scottsdale restaurant, making Cheesecake Factory history as the first woman to hold that position. She has a tremendous amount of food knowledge and possesses all the qualities of a great leader.

"Gina has an intense desire to nurture and develop our staff, coupled with an unbelievable passion for upholding our incredibly high standards for food quality and sanitation," says her AKOM **Jim Cropper**. "With a sparkle in her eye and the strength of a true leader in her voice, she is undoubtedly an EKM who will help ensure our Company's success as we blaze into the future!"

Gina Bommarito



# Spirited Line Cook Wins Scholarship

By Chef Bob Okura and Fabian Reta-GM

## Attention Managers!

We have more great articles available on The Cheesecake Factory managers' portal. Look for them in the "A Taste of the Cake Newsletter" section of the Staff Relations department portal pages. Feel free to print them out and post them for your staff!

Congratulations to Line Cook **Jenny Wong**, who was recently awarded a \$5,000 culinary scholarship at LA Trade Technical College! Jenny, who works at The Cheesecake Factory in Arcadia, Calif., accepted her award on stage at the Multi-Unit Foodservice Operators conference (MUFSO) Oct. 2 during their SPIRIT awards presentation.

Kix Nystrom, Jenny Wong and Chef Bob



Each year, *Nation's Restaurant News* magazine chooses a local culinary school to identify a deserving student to receive a scholarship funded by Coca-Cola. This year, LA Trade Technical College was selected, and Jenny was the scholarship winner. The two main requirements are that the culinary arts student be in the top 10 percent of his or her class and be considered a good citizen by all professors.

Jenny's family was present at a staff alignment to witness the special congratulatory presentation by **Kix Nystrom**, Vice President of Kitchen Operations Support and Executive Chef **Bob Okura**. Her father and brother were particularly proud of Jenny, who is scheduled to graduate in 2008.

"We are so happy for her and not at all surprised," said Jenny's GM, **Fabian Reta**. "She comes to work with a smile on her face every day, and her passion for cooking shows in all the dishes she prepares."

## Ghoulish Gourds

By Joe Phillips-ADO

The boys and "ghouls" from The Cheesecake Factory in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., recently had a chance to show off their creative and eerie talents at their first "spook-tacular" Pumpkin Carving Contest. The ghostly creations were put on display for regular guests, who voted for their favorite ghoulish gourd.

The staff really got into the spirit and had a lot of fun decorating their jack-o-lanterns! The \$100 grand prize winner was Server **Sarah Domicolo**, who carved a witch's face. This was just one more great example of our fun Cheesecake Factory culture!

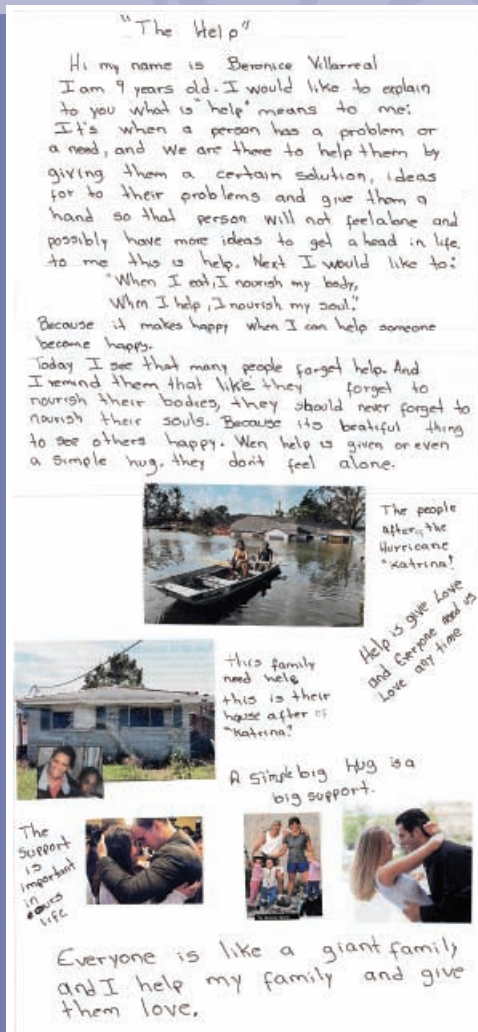


From left to right: Servers Christian Smith, Mike Duffus, Cat McCabe, Mindy Call, Chelsea Mead, Kylene Benson, Cynthia Hollar and Front Desker Kara Barker. The winning contest entry is displayed on the far left.

# The Meaning Of **HELP**

By Vu Nguyen-Staff Relations Specialist and  
Lauren Godfrey-Projects and Communication Specialist

**A**s a way to raise awareness of the HELP Fund (Hardship Emergency Lifeline Program) and encourage our staff to **Support Your Team**, the HELP Fund committee recently sponsored the "HELP Through Children's Eyes" contest. Staff members' children and young relatives were encouraged to submit short stories, essays, pictures or artwork that expressed the meaning of helping others.



Our contest winner was 9-year-old Berenice Villarreal, daughter of Oakbrook, Ill. Cheesecake Factory Baker, **Alejandra Bernal**. Berenice's warm-hearted essay described "HELP" by explaining how "everyone is like a giant family, and I help my family and give them love. When help is given or even a simple hug, they don't feel alone." Berenice received two tickets to Six Flags Magic Mountain, her favorite theme park.

The HELP Fund assists eligible staff members who have incurred serious financial hardship from an emergency situation or catastrophe that caused damage to or loss of their property. For example, 17 staff members from our Chula Vista, Calif. location and five from San Diego, Calif. were forced to evacuate their homes during the recent Southern California wildfires. We were extremely fortunate that none experienced any direct damage, and all are safe and back to work. But could you imagine the amount of financial need that would have been created should there had been a more disastrous outcome?

The HELP Fund is here to assist our staff members in these kinds of emergency situations. Thanks to Berenice and all who participated in the contest for HELPing to raise awareness of this important resource.

**Winning entry in the "HELP Through Children's Eyes" contest**

# A Passion For Excellence

By Leslie Clevenger-Restaurant Operations  
Project Coordinator

We're proud to announce the selection of our 2007 Commitment to Excellence award recipients! In our February 2008 edition of **A Taste of the Cake** we will profile each of these individuals.

**Bakery/Cashier: Kim Kamide**

The Cheesecake Factory, Oakbrook

**Bartender: Michael Paulson**

The Cheesecake Factory, Sherman Oaks

**Busser: Carlos Recendiz**

The Cheesecake Factory, Park Meadows

**Corporate Support: Jen Heiser**

Sr. Manager of Training

**Dishwasher: Paul Uhrig**

The Grand Lux Cafe, Dallas

**Expo: Shane Cassidy**

The Cheesecake Factory, Burlington

**FOH Mgr.: Lorena Rojas**

The Grand Lux Cafe, Las Vegas

**Front Desk: Michael Lewis**

The Cheesecake Factory, Perimeter

**Kitchen Mgr.: Bernardo Almazo**

The Cheesecake Factory, Oakbrook

**Lead Trainer: Casandra Murillo**

The Cheesecake Factory, San Francisco

**Line Cook: Natividad Gladys Gomez**

The Cheesecake Factory, Cocowalk

**OST: Racquel Vesleno**

The Cheesecake Factory, Westbury

**Prep Cook: Isaias Lopez**

The Grand Lux Cafe, Las Vegas

**Server: Ric Feliz**

The Cheesecake Factory, Sherman Oaks

**Steward: Raul Ruiz Sandoval**

The Cheesecake Factory, Redondo Beach

## Cake Comments

Mail your comments and articles to:  
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**Breakfast Monte Cristo**

## A Taste of the Cake™

is brought to you by The Staff Relations department of The Cheesecake Factory Incorporated.  
Published by Grapevine Communications - [www.GrapevineCom.com](http://www.GrapevineCom.com)

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**David Overton** - Editor-in-Chief **Jennifer Bispo** - Executive Editor

**We Wish To Thank:**

Aaron Beach, Nanci Cayson, Leslie Clevenger, Gary Cottrell, Sean Crane, Jim Cropper, Morjana Dias, John Ensey, Judith Forbes, Vinny Forca, Dave Garbowski, David Gordon, Isis Guido, JoAnne Hebden, Laura Helgeson, Dave Hurley, Bruce Judy, Pam Johnson, Tom Johnson, Rich Kues, Kiel Lewandowski, Rich Loska, Michele Maisonet, Jerod Martin, Louise Mercurius, Donald Moore, Jeff Nemet, Vu Nguyen, Sherry O'Neill, Bob Okura, Leo Papakalos, Ray Pawlikowski, Michael Pereira, Joe Phillips, Chad Polesak, James Pratt, Wanda Reed, Fabian Reta, Fran Schwartz, Alan Stein, Connie Todd, Ricky Virk, Dave Wade, Scott Weaver, Rob West and Amelia Ysteboe