

The Family That Cooks Together...

Each year, members of the Cima, Bianchini and Carson families take time out from their daily jobs, slip on white aprons and report to work inside the kitchen in the school cafeteria. For these ten men (most are alumni; all are of Italian heritage), the Alumni Dinner affords them a unique opportunity to generate a significant donation to the endowed scholarship fund established in the name of their families.

Since 1981, Cima, Bianchini and Carson families have cooked the Christian Brothers Alumni Dinner, an all-day exercise in preparing meat, sauce, pasta and salad for hundreds. According to Doug Carson, "It's a labor of love."

For Vic Cima, Jr. ('61), the family's oldest cousin, the day represents a chance to shed his coat and tie and shift from managing employees to keeping the cooks in line. Cima, who is Managing Partner of PR&M Employee Benefits and Life Insurance Services, assumes the role of "kitchen supervisor."

Meanwhile, Doug Carson ('65) schedules no meetings with the Sacramento Sports Foundation or clients of his firm, D. Carson Marketing to tend to the meat and delicious marinade that will simmer throughout the day.

Cousins Frank "Mike" Cima ('69) and Larry Carson ('68) drop their shovels and rakes to pick up pairing knives and serving spoons to prepare the meat sauce. As owners of their own landscaping businesses (Cima Landscaping and River Oaks Landscaping respectively) they can appreciate a hard day's work. But it's no Sunday picnic, either,

chopping celery, onions, mushrooms and special herbs so that the sauce is country fresh.

Other family members who assist include Frank ('75) and John Carson ('80), Bob Cima, and Rodney, Tom, and Vic Bianchini, Jr. ('67).

But this isn't the only time the families assemble in the kitchen. They often prepare meals for the Elks Club, All Hallows Parish, St. Francis High School and various Italian clubs in town (Vic is President of Piemonte Reale, a 200 member Italian organization, and the East Portal Bocce Ball Club). Sometimes it's the whole group; other times just a few. So, how do the descendants of grandparents Mario and Dina Bianchini come by a culinary background? It's inherited, naturally.

Each of the family uncles, including Vic Cima, Sr., ('39), Frank, Dino and Vic Bianchini, Sr. and Bill Carson have cooked for similar social and familial gatherings. Doug Carson says his generation learned by assisting the uncles, usually at family weddings. The tradition in

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-Doug Carson

the Bianchini family holds that the godfather of the bride or groom is automatically in charge of preparing the dinner. He, in turn, calls upon other family members to pitch in. To date, most of the 23 cousins have gotten married. That's a ton of pasta and oodles of experience.

But for the Cima, Bianchini and Carson families (CBC for short),



Members of the Cima, Carson and Bianchini families posed in familiar surroundings – the CB cafeteria kitchen. Left to right are Frank "Mike" Cima, Tom Bianchini, Vic Bianchini, Jr., John Carson, Larry Carson, Vic Cima, Jr., Doug Carson, Bob Cima and Frank Carson. Let's get cooking!

the Alumni Dinner represents a special event.

It began in 1981 when Vic Cima served on the Alumni Association's Board of Directors. One night the Board was discussing how it could increase the dinner's profitability. Vic, a former All-City tackle in football, saw the potential for making a \$2,000 profit by volunteering his brothers and cousins to cook and serve the dinner. (The running joke among the family is that he did so without consulting them first.) He struck an agreement with the school: the families would donate their cooking services if the Alumni Association would donate the profits from the dinner to a scholarship fund established in their names.

Over the past decade the CBC families have helped raised approximately \$20,000. They expect the fund will soon generate enough interest income to provide a CB student with a full scholarship. "We really like the opportunity to give back to the school," says Doug. "We look forward to the day when we'll be able to completely fund a student's annual tuition to Christian Brothers."

When the families first started cooking the dinner, the main entree was always roast beef. Around 1986, Doug switched to chicken marsala.

Another time they served veal scallopini. Tasty Italian dishes.

This year, Doug plans to change the menu to barbecue ribs cooked Italian style with a "light" pasta. The ribs are marinated overnight in herbs and olive oil, then grilled without the tomatoey red sauce. After the pasta is drained, it is simmered in a chicken stock and then combined with pancetta, an Italian cold cut meat. "It's got a delicate, delicious flavor," said Carson, who regularly cooks at home.

After a dozen dinners, and with all those cooks in the kitchen, surely something has gone awry. "We've never burned the pasta," Vic Cima says, flashing a devilish chuckle. Once, however, Doug forgot to turn down the burner on the chicken. "When I got back there were no whole breasts; just bits of meat in the gravy. It was a challenge serving the chicken that night."

How long will the Cima, Bianchini and Carson families continue cooking for Christian Brothers? Well, a new generation of Bianchini descendants have graduated from CBS—Doug's sons Mark ('86), and Matthew ('91). So, figure a long time.

Although the main entree may change from year to year, one thing remains constant: at a Cima, Bianchini, Carson dinner they'll never burn the pasta.



