

United Way and Carrabba's unite with good food

Carrabba's Italian Grill in Destin opened its doors early on Friday, April 12, for some cooking fun with diners who came to participate in cooking demonstrations and donate to the United Way of Okaloosa and Walton Counties.

Carrabba's Managing Partner Paul Schreiner, a 15-year veteran of the restaurant, welcomed the 50 guests to the event. Schreiner said he has a passion for the restaurant and hospitality. He also believes in community involvement, which he shows by serving on the United Way Board of Directors .

Following the welcome, guests separated into groups for cooking lessons, complete with recipes furnished by the restaurant. While one group learned to make Marsala wine sauce and grilled chicken, another learned to make sautéed spinach with golden garlic slices and Cozze in Bianco, or steamed mussels in white wine, basil and lemon butter.

Restaurant Manager Nelly Rondon took charge of the Marsala wine sauce and grilled chicken demonstration, which, in his hands, looked easy enough for any slightly experienced home cook to handle.

At the second station, Kitchen Manager Yani Denev sautéed the garlic and spinach in a matter of seconds. He and Schreiner walked the hungry onlookers through making the steamed mussel appetizer.

Everyone had a chance to watch the demonstrations and ask questions before taking a seat for lunch, which consisted of Italian bread and olive oil, Cozze in Bianco, Caesar salad, Chicken Marsala, pasta and sautéed spinach. The meal was topped off with a serving of Sogno Di Cioccolata or Chocolate Dream.

The extremely full and very happy diners then had a chance to win a few door prizes. No one went home empty-handed, as the restaurant provided each guest with a packet of Carrabba's special spice blend.

Ronda Davenport, Vice President of Campaign/Marketing, thanked the Carrabba's staff for their effort, as well as the diners who came to learn Carrabba's secrets for great food, enjoy a delicious lunch and give to United Way.

The United Way of Okaloosa and Walton Counties provides funding for 42 local agencies that make a difference in the lives of thousands of area residents, who may be your friends, neighbors or family members.

For information on how you can get involved, contact United Way of Okaloosa and Walton Counties at 850-243-0315.