

GUIDE TO
THE GOOD LIFE
CHICAGO

THE South Side Drive

SPECIAL EDITION

IN THIS ISSUE:

**Exclusive to
South Side Drive
Magazine**



Rael Jackson shares his passion for the day and the Real Men Cook 33-year-old legacy.

Photos: Daveed Halmes



Real Men Cook Celebration 33 Hailed As Joyous Tribute to Black Men

by Melody McDowell

Perfect.

That is how the 2022 Real Men Cook® Celebration was described: The weather was perfect. The vibe emanating from the hundreds who attended was perfect and the variety of chefs and their “perfect” cooking selections had those sampling craving for more.

The event was held at the Quarry Event Center, 2423 E. 75th Street, -- corporate headquarters of Real Men Charities, the charitable arm of Real Men Cook. The Quarry is lovingly referred to as the gem of South Shore because it has been transformed into a business, arts and entertainment hub as well as a festival destination.

The Fresh Market, continued to demonstrate why they have been deemed number one grocer in too many categories to list.

Presiding over the event were Yvette Moyo, co-founder of Real Men Cook and CEO of the presenting nonprofit, Real Men Charities, and Rael Jackson, Program Manager and General Manager - Real Men Cook.

For some, it was their first visit to the Quarry, and they got the chance to see – and enjoy -- the space.

The men grilled, cooked and showed off their culinary skills in the main stage area. They also cooked their special dish in the adjoining banquet hall and outdoors on the property where the men grilled in a beautifully decorated and love-filled atmosphere. Throngs of Real Men Cook



fans came out to enjoy the fun, fellowship and the opportunity to pay tribute to fathers. This love was at the heart of the event, which marked its 33rd anniversary.

Lead sponsors were the University of Chicago Medicine and The Fresh Market. Both aligned with the Real Men Charities’ healthy families and communities’ mission. The nonprofit enjoyed additional support from Chase Bank, Sterling Bay and Moo & Oink.

For the occasion, The Fresh Market provided fruits and vegetables. The greens were among the highest quality as well as the fruits and vegetables. Chilled watermelon slices and pineapple were served cold to the crowd during intervals to refresh in the summer sun. Roasted asparagus, potatoes and more were part of the healthy mix.

Chicago “royalty” -- Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Chicago Police Superintendent, David Brown – delighted the crowd by stopping by.

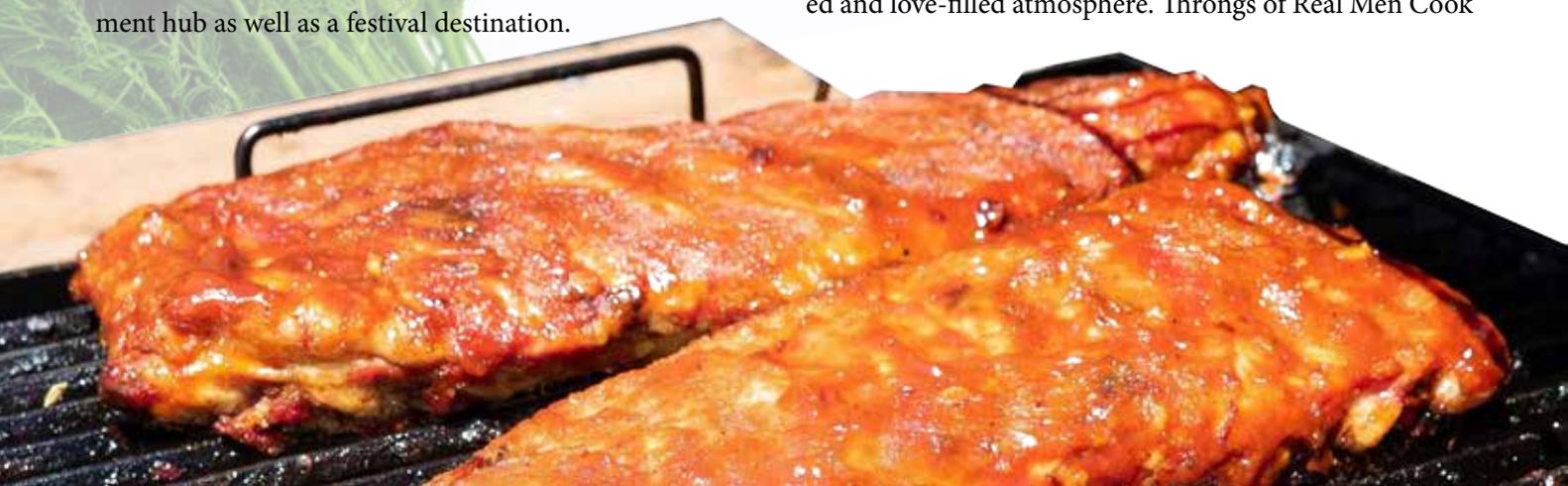
Mayor Lightfoot arrived just as festivities began.

Grillers prepared in advance for RealMen Cook guests.

Looking over the crowd of chefs, she acknowledged the organizers, cooks, fathers and father figures and noted how they were positively engaged and serving. This show of love prompted her to share nuggets about her father, Elijah. Reflecting on her dad, she said: “I think about my father who has been gone 11 years. He struggled and went through a lot during the height of Jim Crow and while growing up in the segregated South. He was always conscious of not wanting to do something that would harm his family.” Eventually, the family moved to Ohio where Lori thrived and her leadership skills were cultivated.

She encouraged the crowd to “live your values everyday.” She also stressed the push for Economic Development and said the program, “Invest Southwest” is an initiative that will boost economic development.

The Mayor also commended families for enjoying the day with their children adding, “The family needs to know where your child is and who they are with.” She encouraged guests to use the app that would provide a plan for



the summer; MYCHIMYFUTURE.

Police Superintendent David Brown mingled with the crowd who gave him a warm greeting. He noted and praised the positive, assertive efforts and programs for youths to seniors offered at the Quarry.

In keeping with the message of putting a spotlight on Black families, Real Men Cook has become a day of gathering families in a spirit of love.

Generations of families attended together, including the Ricks/Walton family which boasts a family history of four generations of being cooks, and being engaged in the revelry of Real Men Cook. The saga of the Ricks/Walton family began with elder, now ancestor, Russell Ricks who cooked in the very first Father's Day Real Men Cook. Russell launched a family history that spans all 33 years. His son, Mark Ricks and Mark's son Kendall, became a cook team, and Russell's son in law, Chaga Walton, and his son Khari, cooked and eventually Khari's son, Justin, joined the ranks with uncles Peter Henderson and Edmund Walton. This year

the family gathered in gratitude to celebrate the recent birth of four-month-old, Mehnasa Pullman. The men serving as guests this year paid a powerful tribute to their family legacy.

The appreciative attendees were treated to an array of food delicacies prepared by fathers, father figures, "week-end" chefs, and professional chefs who gave of their time to serve. Among the chefs who prepared their favorite dishes to share included veteran chefs who have been cooking at Real Men Cook for decades and whose fathers were part of the original celebration 33 years ago. But as a contrast, first-time cooks came and got caught up in the spirit of REAL MEN COOK.

Ashanti Randolph, a caterer, prepared greens and they were so tasty that several pans were gone in no time. He said he's cooked at the event for ten years and said he loves "giving back." This aligns with the mission of the event.

Reggie Carter, veteran Real Men Cook chef, prepared his famous peach cobbler, which is also a favorite. Be-

Chicago Police Superintendent, David Brown, acknowledged the difference the Quarry has made thanks to Real Men Charities' efforts on the Far East 75th Street corridor.



cause of that, long lines were at his station. Carter served authentic New Orleans cuisine with a different selection each hour. He also treated the crowd to beignets, a New Orleans favorite.

Wayne Scott-Williams and Loren Taylor have contributed to the organization's cultural events this year. Loren added to the success by donating time in the kitchen and beyond. While Wayne brought his New Orleans culinary skills to the event, with his shrimp creole – a crowd favorite.

Cordell McGary of Working Well With Chef Cordell worked with cooks to manage the operation from the Quarry Kitchen, where he was assisted by four Quarry youth employees, trained in hospitality and food festival safety. Senior Quarry staff helping to deliver a result of ultimate satisfaction, with an estimated 30 different tasting selections.

Chicken, sausage, salmon and catfish, turkey, beef and vegan tacos, were featured dishes. In keeping with its health and wellness mission, there were plenty of fruit and vegetable dishes available for sampling. Doctors from the University of Chicago Medicine served kale, corn and pasta salad and provided materials and conversations as well as an assortment of healthy dishes.

Those who attended represented a broad cross section of the community, including hard-working males who are bound by their resolve to uplift the African American family and give something back to the community.

South Shore United Methodist Church's Pastor Marcus Tabb said it was his first time at Real Men Cook. He said he loved everything he tasted. He even took a moment to help serve to relieve cooks. He applauded the event because it benefits the community and singled out Real Men Charities as a family and community-building force for praise and wished everyone a Happy Father's Day and Happy Juneteenth Day. Dr. Issac Whittmon of Greater Metropolitan Church of Christ serves as a community father figure and his presence added a special dimension to the celebration.

Husband and wife Renodder and Patrick Brown of Avalon Park arrived early and were among the first in line to be served. They proclaimed with gusto that they LOVED the tacos and sausage.

"We had a great time," they declared. "It was



What would Father's Day be without joyful children?



High quality greens were cleaned and cooked in the Quarry's Shared Kitchen, home to southside Chefs and caterers



the perfect way to spend Father's Day."

Greg Penn who performs Jazz and Latino Jazz with the Crosswind Band, said he was captured by the mood. "I am feeling it," he said.

Seth McCormick, who has been a regular Real Men Cook fan, claiming it as his Father's Day must do, declared between bites: "I am enjoying myself. Lovely time and good people."

Even children had a great time. Nine-year old Paris Osburn and her cousin A'Caria gave the event a thumbs up. The two live in Minnesota but were in Chicago visiting their grandfather, who opted to have an aunt accompany them.

The event was also a place for mingling and networking. Indeed. Out in the patio, friends munched, talked and renewed friendships. A circle of friends found their niche in a corner and basked in the flow and rhythm of the day. They all agreed that this was "a beautiful event."

Music was part of the event. Music on 75th Street was programmed by experienced sound engineer, Corbierre Boynes, joined by his daughter, J'Han and grandson until resident Quarry sound man showed up. The sounds started at noon, alerting the neighborhood that Father's Day is here in South Shore, is nothing average, and in fact, continues the proud Chicago Father's Day tradition, in which even a former US President claimed as his own. By 1 pm master percussionist, Tony Carpenter, who also serves as music advisor to the Quarry, opened outside the Quarry with an amplified Happy Father's Day chant and accompanied the music specially curated to remind the community of their best family moments. The mayor showed up to happy sounds and families, and testimonials about 75th Street, Juneteenth celebrations the night before and safe and peaceful work of the nonprofit. This led to Real Men Charities being awarded a Safe & Peace Chicago grant for the past several years, for programming from free summer camps to literacy and journalism in addition to martial arts and Men's wellness work.

Capturing the spirit of the day were ABC7, NBC5, WGN-TV and CBS2 who came out, documented the festivities, interviewed the crowd and got the take of Father's Day live with a purpose. Earlier in the day, Chef Fred Dodson appeared on ABC7 morning news inviting the public and serving his special lamb dish. And during the week, President Rael Jackson guested on various radio and TV outlets. Chef Cordell showed his culinary



Real Men Cook president, Rael Jackson acknowledged the work of Jermaine Lawrence of I Am A Gentleman for outstanding work and acknowledged several others for Black male imagining.

Tiramisu dessert attempted to steal the attention of guests, thanks to The Fresh Market.



skills for an NBC5 feature, and "Adverb" provide a young father's take on being a committed father of two young boys. The NBC5 crew and Lee Ann Trotter came out on Thursday where early food preparation started.

There was a brief program where Moyo and Jackson acknowledged supporters and sponsors. Jackson recognized his father, Bill Crawford, who was in attendance and was visibly proud of Jackson's leadership. Crawford reminisced about having his father attend Real Men Cook as their family tradition a few times before his passing. Jackson also referenced his late grandfathers, Walter Crawford and Rudolph S. Jackson, and his father figure, Kofi Moyo, Real Men Cook co-founder, retired for 18 years from the business and relocated from Chicago. Kofi set an example in their homes and businesses that provided a work ethic and legacy for Rael to follow.

Those who helped make Real Men Cook a success were singled out for praise and appreciation. This salute included women behind the scenes in leadership: Angela Phillips, Ivory Jackson, Linda McDonald and Dr Dyi Kinney. The operation and food management was led by Cordell McGary of Living Well with Chef Cordell, with volunteers Wayne Scott-Williams and Loren Taylor. They were assisted by Quarry young adult assistants, who have been employed by Real Men Charities year-round, beyond initial work through the One Summer Chicago option. Now seasoned through the Quarry kitchen experiences, they've had Summer Festival Safe Food service certification, and have worked with a variety of chefs, some for as many as four years. Some began with the Real Men Charities' free Summer camp for a few years. Kudos to the entire young Quarry operation, including Kayla and Karmen Hodge, Joshua Mason and Benjamin Carr.

The high point of the event was a performance by Spoken Word Artist Isiah James, known professionally as "Adverb." He lovingly hugged his two sons and then repeated a mantra that focused on respecting and loving oneself and the community.

Sponsors were pleased with the turnout, the media attention and the warmth and enthusiasm of the crowd.

Walidah Tureaud, Manager - Community Relations at University of Chicago Medicine revealed that they had been a sponsor for 16 years.

"We want men to be healthy so they can take care of the community and their families."

Andre Baker of Chase Community Development -

Consumer Banking -- said, Chase was "proud to be a sponsor." He vowed to make sure financial resources for Real Men Cook were doled out as they are doing real work in the community. Baker, had no official role but felt it important to be present to experience Real Men Cook for the first time. He described the first-time Chase support as an investment in Real Men Charities. Baker wore an Englewood t-shirt and spent some time actually serving. Real Men Charities was acknowledged for several positive initiatives in Englewood. These included the extensive community garden, the Chicago Public Schools' health and wellness work for five years in Englewood, and for their part in the initial launch of the Resident Association of Englewood, well-known today as RAGE.

"Chase wants to empower Dads and Real Men," declared Baker. "It takes a village. More needs to be done."

Jermaine L. Anderson - Founder/Executive Director of I Am a Gentleman was acknowledged for his hard work. He also had praise for the celebration. "Real Men Cook is iconic. I can remember it growing up and I am honored to be part of being honored today."

Jermaine was with his sister and dad who was delighted to be with his children on Father's Day. Frank Anderson, the dad, said it was "Real nice to be around my children." And he said that they take him everywhere.

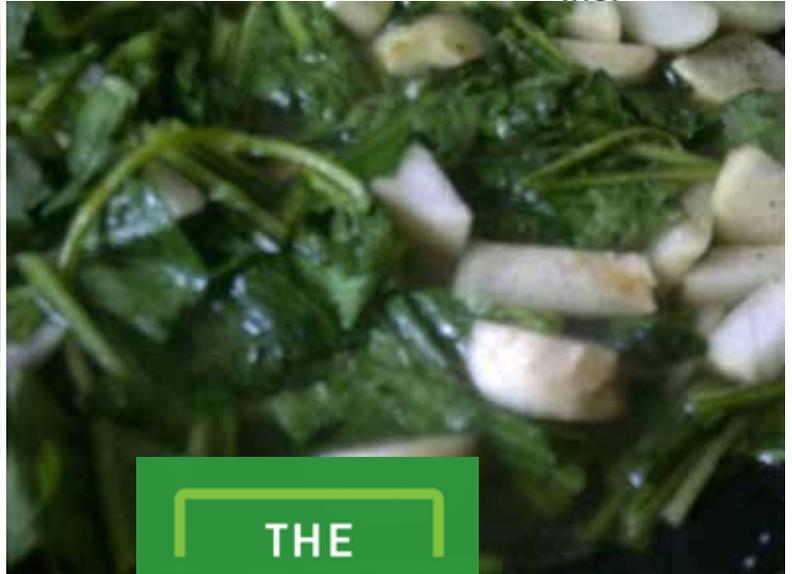
"I just get in the car and they take me where they want me to go. It's always a good time!"

Guests received copies of South Side Drive, also published by Real Men Charities, which included a variety of Juneteenth celebrations throughout the city. Guests and passersby also received family and men's health information presented from a festive outside Chicago Medicine display, well as later in the day inside the gates, 1619 books and gifts from a collaborating nonprofit, Girls Like Me."

Overall, the 33rd Real Men Cook celebration achieved its purpose: to highlight African-American men as dedicated family men willing to sacrifice THEIR day to serve food, be a part of the vibrancy of the day, and to exemplify love.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



Isaiah "Adverb" James, with his son, served as a Real Men Cook spokesperson.

