

# Culinary Giants Chef Ari Vazquez and Chef Jade Gaje Join Forces with Hollywood American Legion Post 43 to Feed Heroes

*At the Hollywood American Legion Post 43, chefs with a kitchen crew prepared 500 meals daily for firefighters, and 75 volunteers sorted donations of essentials.*

HOLLYWOOD, CA, UNITED STATES, January 16, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Just a few days into the New Year, Los Angeles County was hit with the most devastating wildfires to date.

Recognizing the scale of the crisis, [Chef Ari Vazquez](#) initiated the call to action through Instagram and reached out to [Chef Jade Gaje](#). Chef Ari, a talented chef and the owner of Kitchen Prodigy, has captured the spotlight for her culinary skills and memorable presence as a fierce competitor on the Fox show "Next Level Chef."



Executive Chefs Jade Gaje, owner of The Jade Chef, and Ari Vazquez, owner of Kitchen Prodigy, offered gratitude through culinary excellence with healthy nourishment to the champions of our communities. Photo: Platinum Star PR

Chief Ari has led a grassroots initiative to support the brave first responders who courageously battle the vicious wildfires sweeping across Los Angeles County. Chef Jade Gaje, owner of The Jade Chef and daughter of internationally known Grand Tuhon Leo Gaje, Jr., quickly rallied her network to create a collaborative effort under "LA Chefs for Relief." Through their efforts, Chef Ari and Chef Jade seek to uplift and provide much-needed resources to those on the front lines, showcasing their commitment to the community during this challenging time.

Swift efforts were made possible thanks to the [Hollywood Legion Post 43](#), which offered its professional kitchen and volunteers to support this lifesaving mission. Chef Jade, who has been friends with Hollywood Legion member and head of the band committee Nick Papadakis for 25 years, reflected on the rapid mobilization of the effort. "Within 24 hours, I connected with an amazing group of executive chefs to create a menu that met the nutritional needs of our first

responders," said Chef Jade, whose skills extend beyond the kitchen to teaching Pekiti Tirsia Kali (Filipino Martial Arts). "We've been blessed with a supportive community, including donations from Chefs' Warehouse and others. This is why we do what we do: help others."

The meal prep day started at 5 a.m. for Chef Ari and Chef Jade, alongside "LA Chefs for Relief" partners Chef Remrick Clemente, Chef Emerson Majano, Chef Jade de Castro and Chef Jefferson, along with a rotating crew of 40 volunteers. "These firefighters are fighting fires, so they need protein. They need anti-inflammatory food," said Chef Ari, who specializes in nutrition for athletes, including members of the L.A. Rams. "We're not

using any seed oils in our kitchen. We use avocado oil to cook all the proteins and extra virgin olive oil, which is organic, in all the salads, so everything is fresh. To remove the pesticides, I cleaned all the fruits and veggies in vinegar and baking soda. Firefighters inhale so many toxins in their bodies, so we decrease everything we can in the kitchen."

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Every donation counts toward making a tangible difference in the lives of first responders and evacuees. Let's transform compassion into action and nourish the heroes who keep us safe together."

*Executive Chef Ari Vazquez,  
owner of Kitchen Prodigy.*

Together with a team of talented chefs, Chef Jade's martial arts students, and volunteers, they prepared and delivered 500 nutritious meals for firefighters on the front lines. "The meals are carefully crafted to provide nourishment for the physical demands of firefighting," said Chef Ari. The first menu included Mediterranean chicken with pita, steak fajitas with sautéed peppers, onions, brown rice, and a Greek salad with feta and house-made dressing.

"Everything was prepared thoughtfully to minimize waste

and maximize impact. We even repurposed ingredients to ensure nothing went unused," said Chef Jade. "The meals are about more than feeding—sustaining strength and showing our gratitude."

Hollywood Legion Post 43, a historic institution established in 1929, has long been a hub for



It was all hands on deck in the kitchen with Chef Jade, second from left, with kitchen team, E. Monroy, Tanya Porter, Kat Uyenco, and Nick Papadakis, Hollywood American Legion Post 43 member who heads the Post's band committee. Photo: Platinum Star PR

community support. Known for its iconic Art Deco architecture and dedication to military veterans, the Legion generously offered its professional kitchen facilities to the chefs. Over the years, the Post has hosted numerous events celebrating and supporting the local community, making it a fitting venue for this critical relief effort. Post 43's volunteers also joined in, assisting with meal preparation and logistics, further exemplifying their enduring commitment to service.

"I'm in awe of the dedication to the community provided by the Legion Auxiliary members and friends," said American Legion Post 43 Commander Dennis Kee. "Some members are evacuees and showed up with their luggage and U-Haul packed with cherished memories. Nonetheless, they came to pitch in for others equally affected. We are a strong community of resilient active and retired veterans standing shoulder to shoulder with the sons and daughters of military veterans."

With nearly 75 volunteers helping with logistics and more, both initiatives for prepared meals distribution and sorting donated essential items have received an outpouring of support.

"We received 10,000 diapers, 970 rolls of toilet paper, hygiene products, 75 cases of bottled water, easy-open snacks, pet food, 100 blankets, 200 towels, socks, and clothes in all sizes are waiting to go to families," said Brian Binkley, a 10-year military veteran and 15-year Hollywood Legion Post 43 dual member: Legionnaire (military veteran) and Son (both of Binkley's grandfathers served in the U.S. Army World War II). "It's amazing that many corporate and non-profit organizations are partnering with us, and the hope is that more will get on board because people will be in need for a long time."



Known for Filipino cuisine with a twist, Chef Remrick Clemente aka Chef Darko, graduated from Le Cordon Bleu Hollywood, partnered with the mission to feed first responders. Photo: Commander Dennis Kee



LA Chefs for Relief partner Chef Jade de Castro, the owner and operator of LightShowChef Teppanyaki Hibachi Private Catering, is a Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts in Pasadena graduate. Photo: Commander Dennis Kee

Donations are urgently needed to sustain the food operations. Funds will be used for environmentally friendly cleaning supplies, sustainable packaging, utensils, new U-Haul boxes to pack prepared meals and fresh ingredients. "We need \$5,000 to provide fresh meals daily," said Chef Ari.

To help with the fresh meal preparation and distribution:

Donate: Venmo @LAChefsForRelief

Volunteer: DM @TheJadeChef or @KitchenProdigy on Instagram to schedule shifts.

To donate items and/or volunteer for the Hollywood American Legion Post 43, contact Dennis@Post43.com and BrianBinkleyHelp@gmail.com.

Chef Jade emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum. "We've had incredible help from people I've known for years and others new to the initiative. This is about creating solutions and supporting our community," she said. Chef Ari's leadership and vision have inspired this united effort. "Cooking is my way of contributing," she added. "With a positive attitude, we can move mountains."

"Every donation counts toward making a tangible difference in the lives of first responders and evacuees," said Chef Ari. "Let's transform compassion into action and nourish the heroes who keep us safe together."

For media questions or to visit the site, contact Legion Auxiliary member Dr. Marie Y. Lemelle, MBA, PhD, of Platinum Star Public Relations, Inc. at 213-276-7827.

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Hollywood American Legion Post 43 members and auxiliary representatives —Lana Ford, Brian Binkley, Karen Kraft, Marie Y. Lemelle, Harrison Kiernan, and Will Dinsmoor—reflect the compassion and commitment to the community. Photo: Platinum Star Media Group

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