

SHOWING SUPPORT

has never been so delicious



Your Turn

Guy Clarke
Guest columnist

Check out what's cooking in the kitchen as more than 95 Southwest Florida restaurants participate in Sizzle Dining, the charity dining promotion returning Sept. 7 and ending Sept. 27.

Enjoy meals at top eateries for \$19 or \$29 for two-course lunches and \$29, \$39 or \$49 for three-course dinners and help feeding hungry children. For every Sizzle meal purchased during the three-week event, each participating restaurant will donate \$1 directly to Blessings in a Backpack of Southwest Florida, a local 501c3 charity that feeds 400 food-insecure elementary students in Lee and Collier counties every weekend during the school year.

In what started as a week-long event, Sizzle has grown into a 21-day phenomenon that draws thousands of visitors to our restaurants. The wide range of price points makes participating restaurants affordable for locals and profitable during a sleepy September.

This year's event gives a taste of new restaurants, hidden gems waiting to be discovered, and an incentive to revisit treasured favorites in Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, Estero, Fort Myers, Marco Island, Naples, Sanibel Island and Babcock Ranch. Each restaurant offers a special Sizzle menu, so customers can try different types of food that may normally be out of their price range.

From fine dining to casual neighborhood restaurants, diners can sample some of the best Southwest Florida's culinary scene has to offer. The challenge is particularly acute this year, given the higher cost of goods, higher rents and an unprecedented labor shortage.

Here's how Sizzle helps our restaurants survive and thrive:

Increase tourism: Sizzle attracts visitors from both nearby regions and farther away interested in exploring our culinary scene.

Boost in local spending: Sizzle restaurants make dining out affordable and attractive to both lo-

icals and tourists. This leads to increased spending on dining and related services, such as transportation, accommodations and entertainment. Local businesses benefit from the influx of customers and the subsequent revenue generated during the event.

Job creation and employment: The increased demand for dining out during Sizzle often requires restaurants to hire additional staff or offer more working hours to existing employees.

Promote local cuisine and culinary industry: Sizzle showcases our local culinary offerings and highlights the talent and creativity of chefs and restaurateurs in the area.

By attracting attention and generating positive reviews, Sizzle helps promote our destination as a food and dining hotspot.

Collaborative partnerships: More than 95 restaurants are participating in Sizzle which helps strengthen relationships within the community and fosters a sense of unity among local businesses.

Repeat visits and extended stays: Sizzle leaves a positive impression on visitors, encouraging them to return to our destination in the future. Satisfied travelers often plan extended stays to further explore the area's attractions, resulting in additional spending on accommodations, shopping and other tourism-related activities.

Sizzle Dining is easy. Simply pick from participating restaurants at sizzle-dining.com, make your reservations directly with each restaurant and enjoy.

Remember, great food is a highlight of a great getaway, so don't skip the chance to savor local tastes and Southwest Florida's collection of delicious cuisines from around the world. Buon appetito!

Guy Clarke is founder of Sizzle Dining 2023.



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