

UCSB Arts and Lectures

# A Party With Chefs Bourdain and Ripert

By **Richard and Amanda Payatt**  
Special to CASA

**UCSB ARTS AND LECTURES** held one of its annual fundraisers recently – in two parts. Both parts featured chef, author, and television personality Anthony Bourdain, and his best pal, chef and television star of *Top Chef*, Eric Ripert.

The afternoon's festivities began with a lecture cum chat with Bourdain and Ripert. For two hours these two batted at each other in the way that old friends and old married couples do. The men themselves are sort of an odd couple: Bourdain is an irreverent, edgy, foul-mouthed, New Jersey-raised, hilarious commentator on the art of cooking and the frequent failures of craft. Ripert



**Robert and Gretchen Lieff with Eric Ripert and Anthony Bourdain**

the while. (Ripert thinks so.) They hashed out Molecular Gastronomy, which they both feel is over-rated but has kitchen techniques that are useful.

Bourdain grouched about the sudden popularity of regional Italian food joints in New York, and all over the world. He opined that comfort food is a good thing, but he draws the line at every other new restaurant in New York City being of this ilk. Ripert shrugged his shoulders and argued that it was good food, which is inexpensive to make, and gives people a comfortable feeling during a horrible recession. After all, in a recession, a lower price-pointed Italian restaurant that can still turn a profit is a restaurant that will survive.

is an elegant, understated, Michelin three-star rated, French-born chef, whose calm-but-sharp insight is the perfect foil for the mercurial Bourdain. The two put on a mock trial of each other's faults, then settled into easy chairs, and spent an hour shooting the breeze with each other. They argued over whether or not the Farm to Table craze in restaurants is worth

The floor was opened to questions from the audience for about half an hour. Asked about what they would have for their last meal, if they knew their last meal was coming, Bourdain opted for good sushi rice, nori, and perfectly prepared uni (sea urchin.) Ripert opted for good cheese, warm bread, and good wine. Simple food for such sophisticated palates? What can be learned from this?

After the show, Arts and Lectures, with the generous assistance of Gene Montesano, hosted a fundraising party at Montesano's



**Carla Hahn, Luci Janssen, and Vicki Riskin**

restaurant, Joe's Café on State Street. Billed as Party With The Chefs, it was less about partying with Bourdain and Ripert, than it was about hanging out with the chefs from six of Santa Barbara's best restaurants. In all, the teams from the evening's sponsors, Lucky's Steakhouse, Café Luck, Bucatini, Tre Lune, D'Angelo's Bakery, and naturally, Joe's Café, brought out their best appetizers in a competition to see who could impress the big chefs. Or perhaps they



**Celesta Billeci, A&L Executive Director; Eric Ripert; Anthony Bourdain; and Gene Montesano**

Photos by Montie's Photography

were showing off to each other? We certainly enjoyed the spirited activity either way! Delights included beef on toast from Lucky's; and wild boar with apricot sauce, and marvelous oysters from Joe's Café; Tre Lune provided a sweet finish for the evening, with a dessert bar. The full bar was open, and the liquor flowed like water for the wide range of the evening's guests. Michael and Anne Towbes were enjoying the oysters. Singing Chef Andy Lorusso was nibbling on ahi



**Alicia and Ashley Lancashire**

tuna toasts. And the occasional college student was seen mixing a beer with a pecan tartlet dessert. But where were the top chefs?

From their cozy chairs, Bourdain and Ripert remained delightfully funny for the handful of people near enough to hear them over the din of the nearby bar. And when asked what they would do, if they had it to do over again, what would they do? Ripert simply laughed and looked around the room. Bourdain smiled and said, "I'd play bass for Parliament Funkadelic." Come to think of it, that isn't a bad answer.



**Michael and Anne Towbes, Kim Phillips, and Michael Hayes**