

PLATEAU

Traditions  
BUFFET

Wildfire  
CABARET  
Players

**With careful planning and experienced managers, Wildhorse faces down the challenge of opening four new venues**

**May 3, 2007**

**For immediate release**

Imagine the sweaty palms you'd have, opening your new restaurant. Then imagine the looming challenge for Bruce Mecham, who is charged with opening four food and beverage operations, all in the same week. And his palms aren't even damp.

Mecham, Food and Beverage Director at Wildhorse Resort & Casino, has, of course, a lot of people helping him gear up for the opening of two restaurants, a lounge and a cabaret in late April. Altogether, he'll oversee the opening of *Traditions*, a new buffet restaurant at Wildhorse, as well as the fine-dining restaurant, *Plateau*, the sports-themed lounge, *Players*, and *Wildfire*, a cabaret that will host live music acts three nights weekly.

Among those helping him will be some 75 new food and beverage staff, including managers joining the Wildhorse team for the first time. Mecham looks forward to building an esprit de corps with his new hires. Sitting in his office are cartons of books with titles such as "Now That's Service That Sells!" and "The One Minute Manager".

"We want to use the books in our management training and workshops," says the quiet spoken Mecham, who came to Wildhorse two years ago himself, from the Warm Springs tribe's Kah-Nee-Ta Resort. "This way we're all on the same page and we'll all share in the vision for the way our new operation will work. We're looking for the quality of food and service to be the highest that people will find in this region of Oregon."

Fortunately, the experienced food and beverage director at one time opened two dining facilities at once. This time he's doubled the fun.

What's involved in opening four facilities at once? For starters, Mecham points out that it's not quite as difficult as a factor of four. He is ordering all his supplies, from salt shakers to new ovens, through many of the same vendors for all four operations. Ditto for

the hiring process and the development of training manuals and menu spec books. All are happening together.

One happy finding—there are more trained culinary staff in Eastern Oregon than he had expected to find, making the hiring task somewhat easier. “We’ll be able to fill all of our new slots with qualified individuals who share our vision,” says Mecham.

And the work of producing the new menus and acquiring the new equipment is mostly the responsibility of Wildhorse Executive Chef Brian von Eggers, a polished culinary specialist with experience at several resorts and country clubs around the U.S. His expertise takes a load off Mecham’s shoulders.

But it’s still a lot of work and worry. Especially since Mecham is continuing to feed Wildhorse customers 24/7 even as the expansion construction proceeds.

“We’re feeding large banquets and continuing to run a breakfast and dinner buffet every single day,” he notes, “and I honestly feel the flavor profile is still excellent.”

He admits that if he had it to do over again, one thing he’d definitely change would be the mobile kitchen. The kitchen, which is essentially a semi-truck trailer leased during the construction that demolished the original kitchen, is not heated. And the ventilation is less than perfect. “I want to commend our employees,” said Mecham. “They’ve put up with a lot during this phase and yet they continue to provide great food and service.”

Speaking of his employees, he notes that the resort did not lay off a single employee, despite the reduction in food and beverage service during the construction period. Instead, they were reassigned and some were given reduced hours, rather than pink slips. Then, too, the resort’s banquet business has actually expanded during this period, keeping food and beverage staff busy serving conferences and other groups.

While there have been some trying times, Mecham is still very pleased with the fact that the construction has gone smoothly and he is nearly ready to open. And, of course, he is looking forward to eating that first meal in Wildhorse’s new restaurants.

Wildhorse Resort & Casino is the Pacific Northwest's highest paying casino, with a record \$9.3 million slot jackpot. The Resort includes a 24-hour casino, hotel, RV Park, 18-hole golf course and Tribal museum. It is located just minutes off I-84 at Exit 216, four miles east of Pendleton. For more information: 1-800-654-9453 or [www.wildhorseresort.com](http://www.wildhorseresort.com) . Wildhorse is owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

###