

Celebrity chef makes sure charity event a success

Tom Colicchio rolled up his sleeves and got to work Saturday night, crafting 152 perfect plates for a private dinner and concert in Naples.

By Annabelle Tometich
atometich@news-press.com

If you've ever wondered whether these celebrity chefs ever get their hands dirty in the kitchen any more, the answer – for Tom Colicchio at least – is yes.

The “Top Chef” head judge was glued to the kitchen line Saturday night during a Naples Winter Wine Festival event that also included a private concert from Grammy-winning singer LeAnn Rimes.

As the highest grossing auction lot from the 2012 wine festival in January, the concert and five-course dinner, held at a private beachfront estate in Port Royal, raised \$1.2 million for the Naples Children & Education Foundation. The 152 tickets sold for the evening ranged in cost from \$5,000 to \$20,000.

And for that price, Colicchio



Hamachi and caviar from chef Tom Colicchio. PHOTOS BY AMANDA INSCORE/THE NEWS-PRESS

got hands-on.

“Taste it, make sure it’s not too salty,” Colicchio instructed one of his chefs before returning to his cutting board where he cut perfect slivers of hamachi to be plated with caviar and wisps of greens for the first course.

The executive chef and owner of several critically



Chef Tom Colicchio prepares a plate Saturday at an event at a home in Port Royal in Naples.

acclaimed restaurants in New York City, Las Vegas and Los Angeles – including Craft, CraftSteak and Colicchio & Sons – shipped some 90 percent of Saturday’s ingredients directly from his restaurants in Manhattan.

“We provided some refrigerated pantry items, eggs, milk, things like that,” said



Ricotta agnolotti with Jerusalem artichokes and white truffle from chef Tom Colicchio.

Bruce Siegel, director of marketing for The Ritz-Carlton Resorts of Naples. “And we provided the logistical end of it, where they’re doing more the culinary, artisan work.”

Siegel’s troop of Ritz-Carlton employees included white-gloved servers, dishwashers and cooks, as well as the talented hands of Frank Kassner, executive chef of The Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort in Naples. Kassner worked side by side with Colicchio and his staff throughout dinner service.

“He came in and was really nice with everybody,” Kassner said. “For him it’s all about the food. Let’s come in and make some really nice food for the guests tonight; that’s all he wanted. And the food tasted really good.”

Connect with this reporter: @atometich (Twitter).

COLICCHIO'S MENU

- » Hamachi & Caviar
- » Ricotta Agnolotti with Jerusalem Artichokes, Wild Mushrooms & White Truffle
- » Red Snapper with Roasted Red Pepper, Eggplant & Lemon Vinaigrette
- » Braised Short Ribs with Farro & Roasted Root Vegetables
- » Cream Cheese Panna Cotta, Port-Poached Pear, Graham Cracker and Sicilian Pistachio

The 2013 Naples Winter Wine Festival takes place Jan. 25-27. Visit napleswifestival.com.



MORE ONLINE

Visit news-press.com to see video of LeAnn Rimes performing and a photo gallery of chef Tom Colicchio’s dishes from Saturday’s event.