



LOS ANGELES FIREMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION



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Groceries, Games and Giving

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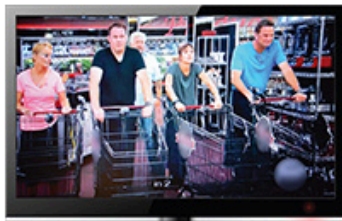


To call LAFD Captain Mark Curry a philanthropist is no exaggeration. And that's not simply because he's a fourth-generation firefighter who has served the city of Los Angeles for 25 years. Well, that's part of it. But Mark is generous not only for devoting so much of his life to others when he's on duty, but for also giving back to his fire family and friends when he's not. A graduate of Westlake Culinary Institute, this impressive chef used his special talent and favorite hobby to bring smiles (and \$16,000) to the Widows, Orphans & Disabled Firemen's Fund.

Hancock Park/Koreatown's Fire Station No. 29 has enjoyed Mark's cooking skills for several years. As a matter of fact, he recently delighted many with his Asian-style braised short ribs at a charity dinner for the firehouse. So it wasn't too surprising to find Mark participating in the L.A. Times-sponsored Taste of L.A. cooking competition two years in a row. Yet when Food Network representatives' approached him about joining in a new TV series where chefs compete in cooking challenges for charity, Mark was nothing but shocked.

“The Food Network sought me out to compete on Guy Fieri’s ‘Guy’s Grocery Games.’ I’ve worked with Widows & Orphans before at fundraiser events, so I thought it would be a great match,” explains Mark. The new reality show, which premiered this past December, pits three contestants in three cooking showdowns – each with special restrictions. For instance, in the first round, the chefs had to create a 5-star dinner, but all of the ingredients had to come from the frozen food aisle in the supermarket.

Never one to back down from a culinary challenge, Mark had a great time, but it wasn’t a cakewalk. During one of the rounds, the chefs were required to make a savory pie. Mark chose a Shepherd’s Pie with a crust that did not cooperate. “It gave me a ton of trouble. They didn’t show it on TV, but I cut myself pretty badly,” says Mark. “If you watch the show closely, you’ll see that I’m wearing a glove in that last challenge.”



Despite his mishap, Mark was victorious. As the winner of the three rounds, he took on the final challenge: a scavenger hunt for ten hard-to-find items throughout the supermarket in three minutes flat. Thankfully, Mark’s kitchen acumen was aided by his experience as a firefighter. “My experience

with the fire department helped me in a number of ways. You didn’t have to be in shape, but it helps,” Mark shares with a laugh. “Also, you had to be able to think on your feet. You had to ‘Improvise, Adapt and Overcome’ and try to put out a product.”

It was during the final challenge that Mark won the \$16,000 and announced his dedication to the Widows & Orphans charity. “Cooking and firefighting aren’t that much different. It’s all about how you prepare and how you train. And you can only get out what you put in,” continued Mark. “There’s a lot of parallels. I think that’s why I enjoy it so much.”



But Mark also knows that being a part of the fire family is also about sacrifice. “My great-grandfather – my mom’s grandfather – was a firefighter in Denver. He was actually killed in the line of duty,” Mark details with admiration and respect. “When my grandfather moved out to California, he became an engineer for the LAFD, and my father is a retired firefighter as well. My father’s brother was also on the job. And my brother, Dan Curry, is a captain out at 93’s.”

With at least one member of his family on the LAFD since the 1930’s, you can imagine Mark takes the family business very seriously. He knows how much the Widows & Orphans charity has helped survivors and their loved ones in times of need. “Being a firefighter is all about being charitable. The firefighters I work with sacrifice their time. They sacrifice their health. They sacrifice time away from their families, and their families have to sacrifice as well,” revealed Mark. “So I feel a little selfish when I get to do something like Guy’s Grocery Games because it is a lot of fun for me doing what I love to help those who give so much.”

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