

## Local Chef to Prepare 'First Salmon of the Year'

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Salmon are already starting to make their way up the rivers along the Kodiak road system, which means they're also showing up on dinner plates. It's probably safe to say that everyone has a favorite way to cook their prized catches, but few methods are probably as elaborate and celebrated as those of local Chef Joel Chenet. This weekend Chenet will dish up a variety of salmon recipes for his annual first salmon of the year benefit dinner.

This is Chenet's 12th year hosting the dinner, which features salmon-themed dishes prepared in a plethora of ways. Think salmon dumpling soup, salmon jerky quiche and Caesar salad with smoked salmon dressing, among other gourmet plates.

"All salmon!"

The dinner is a fundraiser, and Chenet said the proceeds go to a different organization or charity each year.

"And it went to the Alutiiq Dancers, the VFW, the Wounded Warriors, the library last year. And this year all the proceeds for the dinner are going to go to the families of the two state troopers that lost their lives in Tanana."

Earlier this month Sergeant Patrick "Scott" Johnson and Trooper Gabriel "Gabe" Rich were killed while trying to arrest Tanana resident Arvin Kangas.

Chenet said he decided to donate to the families of those men because he is saddened by their loss and also believes in the brave work Alaska State Troopers do.

"And they're doing such a great job and you know they put their life everyday on the line for us and I think they deserve it."

Chenet said he's been busy preparing for the dinner since Tuesday, and will be hard at work collecting the salmon and getting things ready until the dishes are served.

“So it’s kind of scary to be sure that we have all the fish that we need, but we will. So far so good.”

He said a few canneries have stepped up to help contribute fish.

The first salmon of the year dinner actually began as a way to honor Alutiiq culture and the tradition Chenet learned about where the first salmon of the season is presented to elders.

“So I thought I should do something like this. So the first year actually we did it at the old Mill Bay and we had the Alutiiq dancers dancing and we had the elders from the different associations — Koniag, Afognak Village, Afognak Corporation — all the older people at Mill Bay and then we actually gave them a fish.”

The event has since evolved into a public feast and annual fundraiser.

This year’s dinner will take place on Sunday at 5 p.m. at the Elks Lodge. Tickets cost \$40 each and are available at Mill Bay Coffee. Chenet said there will also be live and silent auctions and a performance by St. Innocent’s Academy.