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(505) 863-6811 [ELSEWHERE] (800) 545-3817

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Chef Don Miller has a few tricks up his sleeve at the culinary workshop, "How to Change Hospital Food from Ho-Hum to Yum in Three Easy Days," at Fort Wingate High School this week.

(Tamara Viles/Independent)

Chef teaches cooks hospital food tricks

By Ted Rushton
Staff Writer

FORT WINGATE — A flash of magic, such as turning an ordinary billfold into a flaming torch, is one of the tricks "Chef Don" uses to turn ordinary hospital cooks into motivated gourmet artisans.

"If the food is good, it makes a big difference in a hospital," said Don Miller, a certified executive chef who is also a registered dietician, one of three people in the nation to hold the dual titles.

Since June 1991, he has taught the skills needed to transform good cooks into great cooks, based on his 30 years experience in the food business.

"I teach people how to make food better," he said. This week, he's applying his magic touch for 72 cooks and dieticians from 22 Indian Health Service hospitals throughout the Southwest in a three-day clinic at Fort Wingate High School.

All tricks aside, the key element in his approach is excellence and pride in one's work. He stresses, "Quality is everyone's job at Ford Motor Co., quality is everyone's job in our kitchens."

He found a ready response from Bonnie Delong, a registered dietician at the Gallup Indian Medical Center and the prime mover in bring Miller to Fort Wingate this week.

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