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Chefs serve gourmet food at Fenway Park to raise money for Boston Marathon bombing victims



CAPTION



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BOSTON — Boston Marathon bombing victims joined hundreds of first responders and well-wishers at Fenway Park as dozens of top chefs served fine food and drinks from concession stands in a project intended to raise money for those killed and wounded in the twin explosions.

The Boston Bites Back event at the Boston Red Sox's home, the oldest baseball park in the major leagues, was held Wednesday, a month after the April 15 attack in which two pressure cookers filled with explosives and shrapnel exploded near the marathon's finish line. Three people were killed and more than 260 others were injured.

About 100 chefs served fine wine and fancy food to attendees as they attempted to raise \$1 million for One Fund Boston, a charity set up to help the bombing victims, many of whom lost limbs.

Emergency workers, bombing victims and government officials were among those feasting on some 60,000 hors d'oeuvres, including ceviche shots, seared duck breast, oysters, foie gras, spring seafood salad, pastrami sandwiches and other dishes. It was quite a change from the usual pretzels, hot dogs and candy offered at the ballpark.

Bombing victim Lee Ann Yanni, who broke one of her legs in the attack and was still on crutches, attended the event with her husband, Nicholas Yanni, who also was injured.

"As somebody that was significantly injured but luckier than some, it really, truly means a lot that other people are willing to help us just to get back to normal life," Lee Ann Yanni said.

The chefs, who donated the food and wine, cooked and served guests for four hours from behind Fenway's concession stands and at tables throughout the Big Concourse and the park's Budweiser deck.

Five thousand tickets were available at \$200 each, entitling people to eat and drink as much as they wished; 200 VIP tickets were offered at \$1,000 each, with access to a more intimate and exclusive gathering at the ballpark's EMC Club. An online auction before the event featured packages including unique dining experiences from top chefs and personal shopping with fashion expert Gretta Monahan.

Boston Bites Back was spearheaded by celebrity chefs Ken Oringer, who owns six popular restaurants in the city, and Ming Tsai, a creator of the East-meets-West movement and a media producer. Others behind the initiative include Gov. Deval Patrick, the Red Sox and food service provider Aramark.

Organizers described Boston Bites Back as a "once-in-a-lifetime tasting event" that demonstrates the city's unrelenting spirit while raising money for those affected by the bombings.

The victims have suffered and struggled since the attack, Oringer said.

“A lot of them lost limbs, a lot of them are not gonna be able to work again, a lot of them have families,” he said at the event. “We just want to do what we can as a community ... to help them out.”

Ming said that Boston Bites Back was not a celebration but an opportunity to share great food and drink, thank first responders and “show these survivors how much we love them.”

“One thing that’s cool about this event at Fenway Park: we are cooking in the concession stands,” Ming said. “Here, for example, from Blue Dragon, we’re doing this braised octopus with Ma-La oil with vinegar fries. And over there, we have lobster corn dogs and lobster BLTs, we have pizza, we have seared foie gras. We have amazing food that’s never been served at Fenway Park.”

That excitement was shared by Lee Ann Yanni.

“I’ve tried the asparagus soup and it was actually excellent,” she said. “I’m highly looking forward to the desserts because that’s my thing.”

For Laura Wilson-Mills, a nurse who treated bombing victims at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Boston Bites Back gave her a new perspective and a healthy dose of satisfaction.

“To see them now,” she said, “they are real, they have real lives, they have families. ... It also makes me feel good that I’ve helped not only the patient, but their family.”