



# NEW MEXICO CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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May 21, 2024

## Local celebrity chef conducts vocational culinary classes for inmates

Chef Fernando Ruiz is a three-time “Food Network” champion

**SANTA FE** – The New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) is excited to announce its partnership with the Entrepreneurial Institute of Northern New Mexico, to introduce a culinary training program at the Penitentiary of New Mexico (PNM). This initiative aims to provide valuable vocational skills and opportunities for inmates to pursue a post-incarceration career in the culinary arts.

Leading the culinary training program is renowned Chef Fernando Ruiz, a three-time Food Network champion. His notable victories include “Guy’s Grocery Games,” “Chopped,” and “Beat Bobby Flay.” Chef Ruiz brings a wealth of culinary expertise and experience to the culinary program. As the owner and operator of the upcoming restaurant “Escondido,” his first signature restaurant in Santa Fe, Chef Ruiz is passionate about sharing his knowledge and nurturing aspiring chefs.

“The New Mexico Corrections Department is extremely proud to embark on this exciting partnership with the esteemed Chef Fernando Ruiz,” said **NMCD Cabinet Secretary Alisha Tafoya Lucero**. “This program has the potential to drastically change the trajectory of lives.”

Through the support of the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions’ federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the program has received funding to ensure its successful implementation. WIOA, a branch of Workforce Solutions, will also track the participants after completion of the program to assist with job placement and enable a smooth transition into the workforce. The program at PNM currently includes nine participants and spans eight weeks. Training sessions are held three nights each week, covering all aspects of cooking. To participate, interested inmates must have a record of good conduct and have 18 months remaining until their release.

“Redemption! This program means redemption for our students at the Penitentiary of New Mexico. I think we all have something to prove, especially in ourselves,” said **Chef Fernando Ruiz**. “I didn’t know what to expect when we started the reentry program, but the feeling I get when we walk out of the prison after teaching class is freaking amazing! These gentlemen are smart, and they deserve another chance, just like I got a second chance.”

*The New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) is one of the largest State Departments in New Mexico. The department staff and volunteers are fully committed to integrating programs in its state-owned facilities for rehabilitation. It is through programs, like educational certificates, that the department aims to reduce the risk of recidivism and enhance public safety in communities. For more information, visit [cd.nm.gov](http://cd.nm.gov) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) at @NMCDPIO.*