



BURGER TIME

by JESSICA BOUDEVIN



Building the world's largest burger hasn't satiated Nick Nicora's appetite. After receiving the news that his application for the title of world's largest burger had been accepted by Guinness Book of World Records Nov. 7, Ovations' VP of Business Development for the Western Region said, "Now we're thinking about what other records we're going to break."

Nicora brought Ovations Fanfare, a subsidiary of Ovations Food Services and Comcast-Spectacor, to the Alameda County Fair in Pleasanton, Calif., July 2 to team up with Brett Enright of Juicy's, owner of the world's largest grill, to create the world's largest (commercially available) burger. For that record-setting feat, Nicora was selected as this year's *Venues Today* Hall of Headlines award winner for Concessions.

Building the burger has helped build business for Nicora, who said that the promotion shows potential customers that Ovations is willing to work with a client to establish an exciting atmosphere.

"We worked with the Alameda County Fairgrounds to make an event out of the record, instead of it just being about Nick and Brett," said Nicora. "That's what truly being a master concessionaire is."

The company was successful in renewing its contract at the Orange County Fair, Costa Mesa, Calif., this year. "Was that because of the burger?" mused Nicora. "Probably not — but it's another thing that shows that we're here for the larger experience, not just the bottom line."

Not only did Ovations spearhead the effort to create the behemoth burger on the fairgrounds, the company was also in charge of concessions for the fair, which ran June 22-July 10. They have worked with Alameda County Fair for the past eight years. Ovations used locally sourced ingredients for the 777-pound burger in order to support the agricultural emphasis of the fair, which saw an 11-percent increase in total food sales.

Food and beverage sales for Ovations Fanfare were over \$1.5 million for the 17-day event.

The burger itself took 13 hours to cook, and bites were sold for 99 cents in recognition of the 99th anniversary of the Alameda County Fair. Over 500 people ate their approximately pound-sized

burger bites, the proceeds from which went to Alameda County Community Food Bank.

Though the Guinness Book of World Records has accepted that Nicora's efforts resulted in the creation of the world's largest

burger, part of the requirement for the title is that the burger must be on sale for one year, so official recognition is on hold until the summer.

The only current buyer is the Barrett-Jackson Auto Auction in Scottsdale, Ariz., Jan. 15-22. The preliminary order for the event's family day will mark the first time the burger has been re-created.

The cost of the burger is \$5,000, just \$1,000 to \$1,200 more than what it costs to make. Ingredients aren't the only costly thing about the final product. "When you start adding up logistics, and the forklift needed to flip the burger, it starts getting really expensive," Nicora added.

Athens Bakery donated the 250-pound bun for the record-breaking event. Other sponsors made the record possible as well, including Bay City Scale, which weighed the burger, and Hertz, which provided the equipment used to flip the burger.

"We flipped it about every hour on the hour, which would create quite a scene because the BBQ would raise up and we'd pick the burger off the grill and put it on a spindle," said Nicora. Juicy's Outlaw BBQ Grill cooked the burger over wood chips, giving the meat a gourmet flavor.

Nicora's family was able to share in the record-breaking experience. He planned a surprise party for his mother's 80th birthday with 200 guests, but as it turned out, more than family and friends got in on the birthday surprise. "We were stalling in order for the burger to get to the right temperature for the health department to allow us to sell it, and the whole crowd stopped to sing happy birthday to my mom," said Nicora.

"With this event, you blend the emotion of the fair and the relationship with the client, and then you bring in family, and add in my friend Brett from Juicy's, and everything comes together to break the record," Nicora said. "It goes to show that you never know what's going to happen one day to the next — as long as you continue to do the best quality product and treat people well, then good things will come to you."



CONCESSIONS

Above: The world's largest burger was prepared at the Alameda County Fair, Pleasanton, Calif.