

15 MINUTES

'Tattoo ministry'

Joe Anthony Sanchez, or "Mr. Sanchez," as he's known at his shop, Exclusive Tattoo Co., has been in the ink business for 15 years. Before he started, he said he hated his job picking fruit in Orland and Durham. He got his first tattoo when he was 15 years old (his last name, which is now covered up by a flower on his right arm). He chuckled while reminiscing: He was drawn to tattooing because of "what I thought was the lifestyle of a tattoo artist." It developed into a passion that extended beyond the art and into the spiritual realm. Sanchez, who is a nondenominational Christian, says his vision for the shop is one that includes "spreading the word" and giving back to the community. Sanchez opened the shop 3 1/2 years ago with two business partners, but after buying them out, he's the sole owner and part of a team of five artists. Most recently, he downsized and has some aesthetic touchups in store. He's also considering opening another location in Sacramento. To make an appointment, call 715-7286, or visit the shop on Facebook or at 2109 Esplanade, Ste. 100.

How do you like running your own shop?

It's good. I like the freedom of setting my own schedule. I didn't want to be a business owner, but it kind of happened. I was tired of working at another shop where the owner was never there. I didn't want to float somebody else's shop. [At first,] I only had enough money to open up the doors ... to pay the rent and the deposit and that was it.

What makes Exclusive Tattoo Co. stand out?

[It's] custom. We don't have flash up on the wall. You can't just walk in and pick something off the wall; we've got to draw it for you. When [customers] come in, if they haven't heard about us, we tell them, "Look, the design you have, it's an awesome design. We'd like to take that design and make it our own, just for you, so no one else has it, you know what I mean?" The hardest canvas is the



PHOTO BY ASHIAH SCHARAGA

skin. You have to know how to tattoo on a range of skin tones, colors, body shapes.

Do you have some favorite pieces you've done?

Jesus tattoos. God-related stuff is awesome. I say, "Cool, it's Jesus. Let me tell you about Jesus." Preach the gospel a little bit.

What is your vision for the shop?

What's left after bills, I want to take that money and build the tattoo ministry: We go with Bibles and pray for people and feed the unfortunate. It starts here: I have [Christian rap] videos playing on my TV ... and [customers are] like, "Oh, who's this?" and I tell them and I just start talking about God. [And] I want people to feel welcome here. I want people to know that they're not going to get attitude from anyone here. That we're not hard-headed, we're not disrespectful to people.

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THE GOODS

Growing season, eats and startups



by
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As we head into fall (RIP summer), it's hard not think about harvest season. I happen to live nearly across the street from acres of orchards, so I'm anticipating the sound of the shakers (shaking the "L" out the almonds) starting up soon.

What's surprising is, with the release of the latest crop report this week, nuts are no longer **Butte County's** biggest cash cow. That honor for 2018 goes to rice (\$161 million), followed by almonds (\$155.5 million) and, finally, walnuts (\$154.5 million). Put into context, in 2017, walnuts raked in \$254 million. Among the reasons for the steep drop: Chinese tariffs in response to President Trump's trade war. But he's still "making America great again," right?

When the trickle-down effects are taken into account, this news is a pretty big deal, as agriculture is Butte County's biggest industry. In fact, 1 in 5 jobs is ag-related, according to **Louie Mendoza**, the county ag commissioner. The drop in walnut earnings is being attributed to a drop in cost. And while the majority of sales are exports, it's a good reminder to shop at farmers' markets—let's keep our money local and support our neighbors.

SPEAKING OF FOODSTUFF I had the occasion to check out the annual **Taste of Chico** street festival this past Sunday (Sept. 22) and, as always, it was a blast. Perhaps my favorite discovery was **Momona's** pork belly onigiri, a menu item I've somehow never tried but will definitely add to my repertoire, as it was crunchy, soft, savory and came with a delicious aioli.

Second fave: **The Lab Bar & Grill's** falafel wrap. I'm a little picky, ever since staying above arguably the best falafel shop in Cairo while traveling some 13 years ago. Lab owner **Kevin Jaradah** tells me the ingredients came straight from his family's home country of Syria; well, they're doing something right. Pro tip: They'll be part of a rotating menu on the restaurant's new **Arabian Nights** authentic Middle Eastern events every other Wednesday. Check Facebook for details.

All in all, Taste of Chico was super fun. I was a bit disappointed, however, to find at least half a dozen vendors had sold out more than an hour before the event was scheduled to end. Either the event planners need to communicate about ticket sales better or the vendors aren't adequately preparing—but for \$35 a ticket, a significant number of food stalls shouldn't be shutting down so early.

GET YOUR LEARN ON Local nonprofit **Chicostart** and the **Northern Rural Training and Employment Consortium** (NorTEC) are sponsoring **growTECH Fest** Oct. 8–10, billed as "the biggest event for startups, investors, entrepreneurs, techies, students, educators, business owners and community leaders."

Speakers will include many of the area's usual suspects: **Ken Grossman** (Sierra Nevada Brewing Co.), **Dan Gonzales** (Fifth Sun and Meriam Park), **Jeff Cresswell** (Klean Kanteen) and **Colleen Winter** (Lulus). Plus, the keynote speaker is **Paul Singh**, "chief hustler" for Results Junkies, a traveling consulting firm for startups.

Go to growtechfest.10web.site to sign up. (Students can attend for free!)

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