

## Serving up love

As the conversation involving homelessness takes center stage in California, Loaves & Fishes continues to carry out its mission. Just north of downtown Sacramento, the organization supports nearly 1,000 men, women and children a day—without government funding of any kind. It accomplishes this with help from more than 1,000 volunteers who work at the complex each month, and through donations of food.

At lunchtime, the bustling dining room serves meals to as many as 650 people, 364 days a year. On a recent Monday before the lunch rush started, SN&R caught up with **Loaves & Fishes** chef **Edwin Burton**, better-known as “Ed.” The 19-year veteran of the kitchen was peeling oranges at a table in the middle of the dining room, cool as a cucumber. It wasn’t long before he began assertively guiding his kitchen staff and a fleet of volunteers through their tasks with his occasionally booming, ever-appreciative voice.

### How do you approach leading so many new volunteers on a daily basis?

I ask, “How you doing?” I say, “This is what we’re doing today.” I try to be patient and be polite. If you respect them, they respect you. They all come from different backgrounds. They all want to be down here. They come as individuals and groups. There are all sorts of nice volunteers.

### What’s your favorite dish you serve here?

I mean, there’s not really a favorite. It’s about making it right, you know, with care and love in it.

We get vegetables and steak. We get fish, catfish, chicken, carrots, celery, acorn squash, snow peas, a variety, something of everything. Whatever we get, we incorporate into the meal, whatever else we have on hand.

### How often do you cook at home?

(Laughs) I’d say about twice a week. My fiancée cooks at home most of the time.

Edwin Burton  
cooks for Loaves  
& Fishes, helping  
feed the hungry.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL COREY

That’s her kitchen, so I’ve gotta stay out of her kitchen. It’s nice.

We still cook for a lot of people. We might have people come over, you know, grandkids. She likes to make chicken or pork chops, turkey, whatever. Salisbury steak from scratch. She loves to do it, whenever we want to do something.

### What do you like about your job?

There are the volunteers, the guests. And how everyone appreciates and cares about everything they do. You know, there’s a lot of love here.

### If you could have anybody as a volunteer for a day, who would it be?

(His fiancée, who also works on site, walks by.) He already know about you! That’s my fiancée right there.

I had the governor down here. Well, one person I’ve always wanted to meet is President Obama. The patience he has and the way he goes about things, you know.

### Where do you see yourself 20 years down the road?

Still working—I’ll still be here. □

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