



GOOD
RESTAURANTS
STUFF

RECYCLE

Getting to Know...

CRIS BENNETT

OWNER, GOOD STUFF RESTAURANT

Cris Bennett is all about the good vibes and his life is a testament to his motto, Eat Good, Do Good, Live Good.

Written by Melani Morose Edelstein
Photographed by Erik Jay

The Palos Verdes Peninsula has a way of imprinting itself on the heart. Generation after generation of families gravitate to the hill. PV offers a unique twist on suburbia and an extraordinary place to raise kids and live peacefully. So many different kinds of people live and work amongst us and the reasons they love PV are as varied as they are.

Take Cris Bennett, the venerable owner of Good Stuff restaurant. "There is just a different vibe up there. I really like PV, I really do," says Bennett. "It's peaceful and quiet and safe and I really love the dark. I love the darkness of PV a lot. It's so cool. At first it's freaky but then it's so dark and so peaceful," he explains with a nostalgic smile. "Compared to the beach cities it's just so peaceful, quiet and safe. Really. When I first went back to Hermosa it was so loud and bright. I couldn't sleep," he says laughing.

The first Good Stuff opened in 1979 and today Bennett operates four successful locations in Palos Verdes, Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach and El Segundo. "It's my passion. I love my customers and I get to know all my staff and its family. We serve a healthy meal at a fair price, we know your name and it's important."

More than four decades after opening his first Good Stuff restaurant and despite a massive unexpected shift in his business model during the pandemic, Bennett and Good Stuff are still going strong. Patriarch of a large family boasting many children and grandchildren, Bennett is happily engaged to long time south bay business owner Dianne de la Garrigue. As the CEO, owner and operator of Manhattan Beach's Montage Boutique Spa since 1989 she and Bennett are both deeply committed to the community.

"We are both super vested in the south bay. She is the best. She is my person and just understands," he explains. The couple are on the same page when it comes to lifestyle. While they don't have immediate plans for a wedding they both love to travel and enjoy hanging out with other south bay residents at the restaurant of course but also at community events like the recent BeachLife music festival where Good Stuff helped feed the artists.

"Just do good, that's my signature trademark. It's how I live."



Left to right: Cierra (19), Cameron (27), Chase (25), Cris, Adam (48), Chad (36) and Cody (12); not shown is Cassidy (32)

At a stage in life when a lot of folks start thinking about retirement Bennett admits he loves to golf, workout and travel. He says he wants to spend more time with the grandchildren and he is doing that, but he's not talking about retirement. When the pandemic struck and the world closed down Bennett took stock in his life.

"It just went crazy, everything went upside down. My daughter actually had the idea to do something to make a difference. All my kids are in the restaurant with me and funny, they might have all left at some point but they somehow all bounced back, except one, everyone else came back to the area. So the pandemic hit and my daughter was like let's help, we have to help. So she was instrumental in the feeding of the first responders, that was great."

Bennett and his team tapped into Good Stuff's large customer base, emailing over 40,000 people asking for donations. Donate \$20 and Good Stuff would prepare two meals for health workers at the Providence Little Company of Mary and Torrance Memorial medical centers. His servers and staff were honored and thrilled to make the food deliveries and so many people were able to engage in making a difference.

"We just flooded the hospitals with food and it was amazing. We had so much support. Our customers are the best, the kindest, the most generous and it just felt like a blessing to feed these people," said Bennett.

"It was a crazy time, crazy. Nobody ever could have anticipated that. We had 200 donations the first day and eventually thousands. So we did that for about six weeks and then we did a big community food drive and started giving to police departments and fire departments and we just gave away so much food and we got overwhelmed

and just contributed so much food it was really great," he says proudly. Bennett has always known that food does more than fill the belly. Food also satisfies feelings and when you quench those feelings with delicious healthy food the belly no longer growls.

"I got my first job in a restaurant when I was 15 and I knew that's what I wanted to do. I just always loved the flow of the work. I love the customers and working alongside other people and the hours went by in the blink of an eye and I just always knew serving people, working in a fast paced environment with the public was what I wanted to do and it worked out," he says.

Bennett trusts his instincts.

"We moved up here to PV and we realized there wasn't a lot of stuff up here to eat. We went to Red Onion and Mama T's and I started thinking about how everything was changing and keeps changing. Like the family dynamic and families needed a place to eat with younger people moving in for the lifestyle and the school district," and he was right. Good Stuff Palos Verdes has quickly become a popular dining option.

"The restaurant has so many regular customers it's so great. People gather here and we use that banquet room all the time. People come out in big groups at the PV location. It's a tight community and we love it." With a mutual commitment to do good, live good and eat good the Palos Verdes Peninsula, Cris Bennett and Good Stuff restaurant will always be united.

"Our customers are the best, the kindest, the most generous and it just felt like a blessing to feed these people."

2021 Beachlife Festival

Photographed by Brenda Cash

PV Magazine caught up with Cris Bennett and Dianne de la Garrigue "vibing with friends and living the beach life". #beachlife



Redondo | Hermosa | El Segundo | Eatgoodstuff.com