



# History

In the spring of 2007, Keith "Colonel Angus" Rinzler sat in a restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia with his friend and well-known Burning Man artist, [Zach Coffin](#), discussing, as they were often prone to do... [Burning Man](#).

Zach described the challenges that Burning Man artists with reasonably-sized projects face by explaining that they arrive on the playa during the week prior to Burning Man's official start, work 18 hours a day trying to build and/or install their art piece, and most of them, especially the smaller and newer crews, have little time or energy left to think much about food. Consequently, their energy, enthusiasm, vitality, happiness and overall experience diminishes more each day as they feed themselves with whatever pre-packaged, processed junk foods they can grab, if they even eat at all, until finally, they are so exhausted and burnt out that when the festival actually begins in earnest, they are too worn out to enjoy it.

To which, Keith, in his typical straightforward entrepreneurial style said,

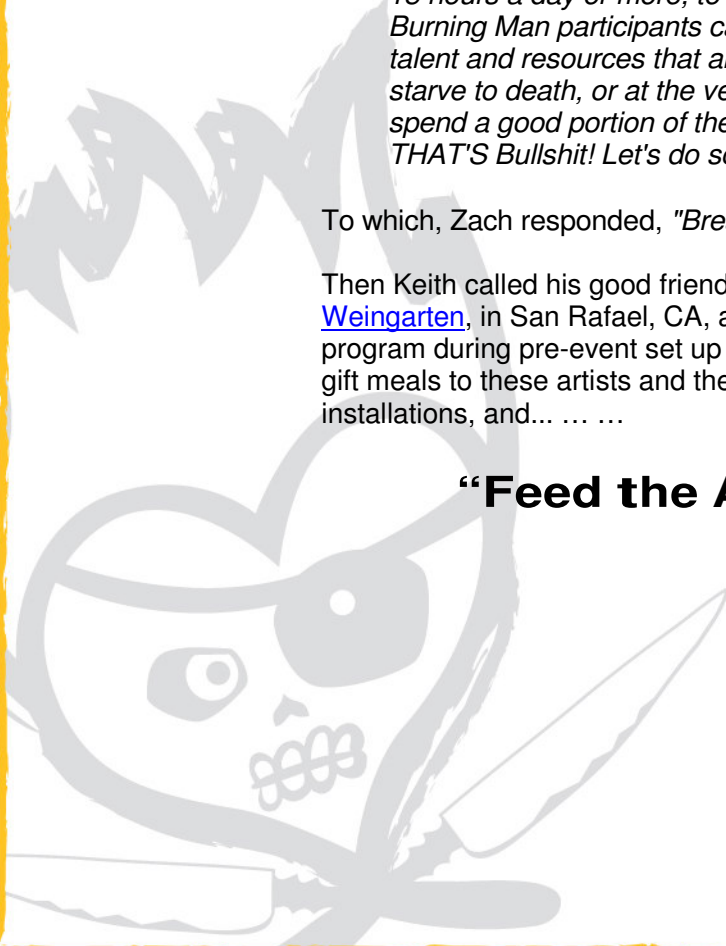
*"Let me get this straight..."*

*The artists of Burning Man arrive on the playa early, work their asses off, 18 hours a day or more, to produce incredible works of art that ALL Burning Man participants can enjoy, and in the process, even with all the talent and resources that are available on the playa, many of them half starve to death, or at the very least work themselves into the ground and spend a good portion of the actual Burning Man event recovering. THAT'S Bullshit! Let's do something about it."*

To which, Zach responded, *"Breathe Keith, breathe."*

Then Keith called his good friend and professional chef, [Jean-Pierre "Chef JP" Weingarten](#), in San Rafael, CA, and described his idea for a grass-roots program during pre-event set up week, in which theme camps' kitchens could gift meals to these artists and their crews, as they were setting up their installations, and... ..

**"Feed the Artists" was born.**





## 2007

In 2007, the concept was successfully tested to rave reviews from all parties. Through the generosity of the [Grand Hotel at Ashram Galactica Camp](#), and a host of eager volunteers, three “Feed the Artists” dinners were produced on successive nights. [The Cone’s](#) crew joined us on Thursday night, [Ant Mischief’s](#) crew joined us on Friday night, and we hosted the [A Cavallo](#) crew (and Larry Harvey, Lady Bee & others) at our finale on Saturday night.

The feeling was electric. The positive energy and camaraderie that developed was simply overwhelming and felt by all.

And, anyone, who attended any of the three nights, can attest to the magic that happened at these dinners. The love, gratitude and appreciation that circulated among the crowd was genuine and irrefutable.

Some of the artists emailed after the event to say:

*“It was great for our team as we ate the best food of all our time at Burning Man...”*

*“The dinner reflected the spirit of Burning Man in a larger scale...”*

*“You have no idea what that dinner meant to us. It shaped the entire rest of the event for us as we all tried to do for others as you guys did for us.”*

Even the volunteers couldn’t say enough about the positive impact of the dinners:

*“Considering how thankful the artists were, I’d say the dinners impacted them in a wonderful way. For them to leave their work and walk into a beautifully prepared meal was great.”*

*“It added a whole new dimension to my BM experience.”*

*“I think the artists gained tremendous reinforcement for the work and sacrifice they make to create and build the art projects. I think they felt very appreciated and acknowledged.”*

*“I would definitely be willing to work on this project again next year.”*

Colonel Angus said it well after that year’s dinners:

“The dinners created an intimate bond between me and the artists and their projects that I had never previously experienced at Burning Man. I felt connected and deeply vested in the projects’ success. I had, by extension, become part of the artists’ crew, and I began to see art at Burning Man in a completely different and more meaningful way.



## 2008

In 2008, the spark that was ignited the previous year was kindled into a roaring success, both in terms of feeding the artists AND recruiting our first group of theme camps. Through the generous funding and/or support of an anonymous donor, [Root Society](#), other early-arrival theme camps, over twenty-five FtA volunteers, and our host theme camp, [Entheon Village](#) (who also accommodated us with a large kitchen and an ample dining space), we exceeded our goals and successfully achieved the following:

- We produced four gourmet, vegetarian dinners (see menus in the [archives](#) section) which fed over six hundred artists, crews and other guests. This included over twenty artist groups, including the entire *Basura Sagrada* Temple crew.
- Entheon Village and FtA also catered four “All Artists” breakfasts that may well have fed every artist group on the playa.
- We exceeded our goal by recruiting *eight* additional early-arrival theme camps and coordinating their feeding of an additional one hundred artists.
- In total, every artist group that responded to our request for information, over 30 of them, received a dinner, and everyone else was invited to breakfast so that almost every funded artist group on the playa, over 650 people, received at least one meal, and in most cases, several meals!
- We created a basic website and produced a comprehensive “Theme Camp Guide” (Please check it out at: [www.feedtheartists.net/themecamp.html](http://www.feedtheartists.net/themecamp.html)) which provides theme camps with all the info they need to throw a successful FtA dinner.
- As evidenced by the amazing amount of testimonials that we received, we fostered an amazing amount of appreciation, community, collaboration, happiness, and good will that reverberated throughout the entire Burning Man event.



Serving guests on (Saturday FtA dinner)



## 2009

In 2009, we fed gourmet food to over 400 people, and for the first time, we did it in a much more labor-intensive format: seated, table-service dinners. And when I say gourmet, I mean GOURMET! *Grilled escolar with nectarine salsa, blue lake green beans, and onion confit* that was served on time and perfectly cooked, *Tofu coconut milk soup with galangal and green onions* that was partially prepared in front of the guests, and for which third helpings were routinely requested; and *flourless chocolate cake with dark rum, dark chocolate sauce, and peach puree* that was so moist it could have come from Pierre Gagnaire in Paris, were but a few of the many offerings.

Not only that, but we set a new standard in terms of entertainment with a nationally-known 'close-up' magician circulating around the dinners, a sky crane that lifted small groups of guests, with champagne, 70 feet in the air to enjoy an unbelievable view of BRC at dusk, live music performed by our own very accomplished harpist and violinist, Annie and Kira, and the now-famous "mystery tent," which had to be experienced to be believed, but, suffice it to say, left every guest who visited with a huge smile on their face. And if all that wasn't enough, lets not forget the premier bottle of wine that EVERY guest received as a parting gift!

And all the more impressive was the fact that all of this, and more, was graciously offered by our kitchen staff and FOH volunteers, night after night, with incredible dedication and commitment to the FtA ideals, and a sense of love, caring, and appreciation for our guests that was just as tangible as the flavors of the foods they were eating.....even in the midst of horrific dust storms that derailed many other camp's activities on those evenings.

But like an automobile manufacturer's participation in, and support of, auto racing, our dinners are a means to an end, not an end unto themselves. Of course they serve as a showcase of our own artistic talents when it comes to food on the playa and a deep expression of appreciation for the artists and others who are our guests, but even more importantly, they serve as an example to all the other Theme Camps of what is possible. If we can serve THAT kind of food, in THAT kind of environment, to THAT many people, in other words, then how hard would it be for YOU, Mr. Theme Camp, to invite an artist group of 10 people over for dinner one or more nights?

THIS is really our *raison d'etre*. THIS is why we do what we do, and in 2009 we did it beyond anyone's wildest imagination, because in addition to all the people WE fed, we organized and facilitated the feeding of an additional 650+ artists by over 35 Theme Camps who stepped up and invited artists to dinners held simultaneous to our own.



That means that in 2009, FtA was responsible for the offering of well over 1000 meals to BRC's artists, during setup week!!!! 1000 meals!!!!

But beyond those simple numbers, what we REALLY accomplished is a giant leap forward towards achieving our vision of a new paradigm at Burning Man, which we call "Radical Collaboration." Within the FtA context, radical collaboration encompasses the principles of Gifting, Immediacy, Civic Responsibility, and Communal Effort, as it seeks to encourage theme camps to take it upon themselves to invite artists and their crews to join them in their pre-vent camp dinners.

We led the way and demonstrated, by example, that with the simple, archetypical gift of a nourishing, heartfelt meal, community support for BM's artists can evolve and become more direct and participatory, a sense of community can be developed between previously disparate groups that promotes collaboration and the sharing of resources, and a largely forgotten expression of appreciation and gratitude can be re-introduced to the BM community and then be the default world.



Luminous Passage Crew at Spin Art Camp FtA Dinner

