



May 11, 2017

El Pollo Loco Celebrates Perfect Pollo with Annual Grill Master Challenge

Finals to be hosted July 11 at Burbank, CA restaurant

COSTA MESA, Calif., May 11, 2017 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- [El Pollo Loco](#) (Nasdaq:LOCO), the nation's leading fire-grilled chicken chain, today announced the Company is bringing back its annual Grill Master Challenge. The Grill Master Challenge, which has been around for two decades, pays tribute to the grilling expertise that put El Pollo Loco on the map more than 30 years ago.

A video accompanying this release is available at

<http://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/d2abb3c7-8303-4869-b82e-5ee892d666af>

The competition provides the opportunity to honor and recognize the individuals that are dedicated to perfecting the art of El Pollo Loco's citrus-marinated, fire-grilled chicken. The grilling process is a labor of love, involving about one hour on the grill including four different cooking stages over open flames. El Pollo Loco cooks undergo significant training and many of the Grill Masters stay with the Company for years, honing their skills to serve up delicious chicken for El Pollo Loco's guests. Historically, the challenge was conducted through internal operations but for the first time ever, the Company is giving guests the chance to see what happens behind the scenes. A video introducing fans to the Grill Master Challenge can be viewed [here](#).

"Our Grill Masters are truly the heart and soul of our company, making perfectly grilled chicken which keeps our guests coming back for more," said Steve Sather, President and CEO of El Pollo Loco. "While we have traditionally conducted the competition internally, this year we've decided to unveil the challenge to our guests and give our Grill Masters the public recognition they deserve. We are excited to highlight not only the winner, but the many skilled cooks that grill up perfect pollo."

El Pollo Loco has over 1,400 cooks across its more than 460 restaurants, but only one will earn the coveted title of Top Grill Master. This year, the challenge will highlight the top six cooks that have mastered the language of the open flame through a series of competitions. Over the next two months, Grill Masters will compete and be closely evaluated at the following competitions:

- | May: Area Level Competition
- | June 22-26: Semi Final Competition
- | July 11: Final Competition

The Company will host the Grill Master Finals at the El Pollo Loco located at 521 N 1st St in Burbank, CA. The challenge will culminate with one final grill-off where finalists will be judged on their technique in several areas, including preparing, cooking, cutting and presenting their chicken to the judges. The winner of the Grill Master Challenge will be named on-site and receive a cash prize along with special recognition.

El Pollo Loco fans have the chance to win a trip to Burbank and be a "Perfect Pollo Judge" at the Grill Master finals, as well as a custom outdoor grill designed and provided by Imperial Commercial Cooking Equipment, El Pollo Loco's grill vendor partner for nearly 30 years. To enter the contest, visit www.elpolloloco.com/perfectpollojudge. To learn more about the competition and stay updated on the action and the latest standings, visit www.elpolloloco.com/grillmasterchallenge.

About El Pollo Loco

[El Pollo Loco](#) (Nasdaq:LOCO) is the nation's leading fire-grilled chicken restaurant chain renowned for its masterfully citrus-marinated, fire-grilled chicken and handcrafted entrees using fresh ingredients inspired by Mexican recipes. With more than 465 company-owned and franchised restaurants in Arizona, California, Nevada, Texas and Utah, El Pollo Loco is expanding its presence in key markets like Houston and Dallas through a combination of company and franchisee development. Visit us on our website at ElPolloLoco.com.

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