

JOSE "JOE" ROMERO



2024 HALL OF FAME LEGACY INDUCTEE

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Joe Romero was born in San Diego, California in 1852, and while a child, moved to Los Angeles. He started working at the Griffith and Johnson ranch, but somewhere along the line he learned how to barbecue using the barbecue pit method. In the 1880s, he started out cooking for family gatherings and small social gatherings.

As word of his barbecue talent spread, he got more catering requests throughout southern California. Romero was particularly known for his “Spanish barbecues,” as they were called back then, which typically featured beef and a side of chili and beans. On many occasions, Romero would also serve traditional Mexican cuisine specialties like enchiladas and tamales. As an example, in July 1909, Romero and fifty assistants spent two days barbecuing a reported 10,000 pounds of beef, pork, and mutton for a local Elks Club.

The largest event that Romero remembered supervising was the February 1924 KHJ Radio Caravan barbecue at the La Joya Lodge in San Francisco. Though 60,000 people showed up, only 38,000 people got to dine on the 20,000 pounds of meat, 3,500 pounds of salad, hundreds of pounds of frijoles, and the 2,000 gallons of coffee prepared by Romero’s team.

After seventy years of experience, it’s no surprise that Romero was locally known as “The Barbecue King.” Romero died at his home in Los Angeles in 1932. After his death, Romero’s son Frank continued the family’s barbecue tradition.