

BEACONS OF HOPE A SHOT OF HOPE

Smells like team spirit: Chefs prepare a charity mix

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New Delhi:

Chef and food consultant Ruchira Hoon saw a lot of her friends and relatives scrambling for oxygen and hospital beds over last few days. Her social media timeline was also full of NGOs requesting for funds.

Hoon felt the best she could do was use her culinary skills to contribute. She started hosting online cooking workshops, teaching people to prepare dishes using her recipes. So far, she has raised Rs 70,000. She eventually hopes to raise over a lakh rupees and donate the same to collectives like Mission Oxygen and Friendicoes.

Many other chefs and food platforms are conducting online workshops to raise funds for Covid relief. This has become a novel way for chefs to showcase their skills, raise awareness about the pandemic and, in the process, raise funds. For the participants and donors, it is an engaging activity where they learn a new dish or skill and are also able to donate for a cause.

Shruti Jain of Kaze Living, an online marketplace for artisan Indian brands that hosted one such workshop, says since they have many homegrown products on their site, they thought it will be a good idea to get some of their partners to host workshops showcasing their craft.

Jain says her pasta-making sessions, priced at Rs 1,000 each, had 35 'active' participants seriously sit through an engaging twohour session, learning new recipes and also contributing to a cause. Buoyed by the response to first session, the proceeds of which went to Hemkunt Foundation, Jain hopes her next session on kimchi will be a bigger draw. "Our aim is to have sessions on making seemingly difficult things, such as pasta and kimchi, with simple ingredients available at home," she says.

In the current backdrop, nutrition consultant and blogger Sangeeta Khanna has seen a keen interest among participants on healthy ingredients. Khanna, who has been conducting regular workshops on handcrafted pasta with whole grains and nutritional ingredients, explains that she has been able to raise Rs

91,000 from 67 participants and donate the same to Hemkunt Foundation, Give India, Goonj and Kalap Trust. She plans to have a few more sessions in June on different culinary topics and contribute some more.

From asking people to pre-register and pay in advance to join the live session or sending them their recipe videos for a donation, chefs are trying different ways of raising money. NGOs are also tying up with prominent platforms to help them in this cause. Anjali Batra of popular food platform Food Talk India says she has lined up workshops with chefs on sustainability and lost cuisines, along with holding talks on setting up startups or building new businesses. She feels such sessions are a good way for people to invest in skill development and contribute to charity at the same time. Batra's next workshop is on food styling and photography with the Open Art Project. Priced at Rs 2,000 per head, Batra says they request people to pay directly to NGOs such as Give India, share a screenshot and receive an email link to join the session.

For young chefs, such as Sambhavi Joshi of Caserecce, a handmade pasta brand, these sessions are not just a fundraiser but also a learning experience. Joshi, who had 35 people pay for her session, says all of them were active participants who asked a lot of questions and wanted to learn about healthy cooking.

“A session that was to be for an hour went on for over two hours and people had a lot of questions, especially about local flours that are easily available. It was encouraging to see people shift focus to local produce,” she said, adding that being able to raise Rs 35,000 for Covid relief through her cooking skills was quite satisfying.



SAMBHAVI JOSHI

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SANGEETA KHANNA

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