

Le Cafe with a cause

- Parisian bistro opens on Park Street

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French consul general Damien Syed picks a chicken quiche from the fare offered at the launch of Le Cafe at Alliance Francaise du Bengale on Friday. (Sanjoy Chattopadhyaya)

March 24: A Parisian bistro with an authentic French menu, served with a generous helping of social conscience.

Alliance Francaise du Bengale (AFB) has lent a corner of its Park Street premises to a unique initiative called Le Cafe, to be run by young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds who have been trained in culinary and management skills.

The cafe opened on Friday in the presence of French consul general Damien Syed, who picked a quiche to kickstart what promises to be an exciting culinary journey for Calcuttans. "Park Street was missing a French touch. This will plug that gap," the consul general said.

"I wanted to recreate a bistro ambience and bring a cafe into our library. It will be open to non-members of Alliance Francaise as well," AFB director Stephane Amalir told **Metro**.

Taking orders of Gazpacho, Quiche au poulet and Tarte aux pommes in English was Suchitra Koley, the 19-year-old daughter of an autorickshaw driver. Neha Sardar, who stays at 65 Pally, the same Tollygunge colony as Suchitra, served the food. At the billing counter was Sujoy Gayen, who also helps his father in idol-making.

"They are part of our 15-member group. These three youths are here, three others are running our restaurant in Chetla and the rest are in training. Their roster will change daily," said Swarup Ghosh, who runs Tomorrow's Foundation. "This is giving them first-hand experience in running a business."

Audrey Perriolat, a volunteer at Life Project 4 Youth (LP4Y), an international NGO working in Calcutta as the youth inclusion wing of Tomorrow's Foundation, said: "The cooking will be done at Toto Café, our restaurant in Chetla that works as an incubation centre for the training of these youths."

Toto Cafe had a humble start but has ambitious plans. "We are in talks for similar services with the American Library and Max Mueller Bhavan once it shifts to Park Street," Swarup said.

The youngsters running Le Cafe are living a dream. "When I joined the LP4Y course a year ago, I could not imagine I would be running a Park Street cafe so soon," Sujoy said.

Le Cafe would be open to all, Friday to Sunday, 11am to 4pm.

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