

Beat: Lifestyle

Cooking blind

A project in Spain teaches blind people

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USPA NEWS - Five men and seven women swarm around the stoves in the kitchen of a social center in the North of Spain. In front of him, Angel Palacios, chef and teacher of this peculiar group of people. Because all of them, including the chef, are blind or almost blind. The project 'Cooking blind', sponsored by the National Organization of the Spanish Blind (ONCE in its acronym in Spanish) tries to give these people the illusion for life and does it between pots.

It is a pioneering project in Spain, although 'Cooking blind' has been underway for almost eight years. Almost as long ago as Angel Palacios, his true alma mater, suffered a retinal detachment that left him almost completely blind, plunged into a world of shadows. The chef gathers around the kitchen a coordinated team and, above all, very motivated. They are all volunteers, but the beginnings are difficult because of the fear of accidents. Not in vain, knives, small appliances and fire are handled. However, no incident has ever been recorded.

The students help each other. They work as a team: one group prepares the ingredients, another makes the filling. Today they are going to make profiteroles. Angel Palacios explains step by step the technique, the quantities of the ingredients and supervises the students. Security is fundamental. However, after almost eight years, the team has become professional and nobody would say that the chef or some students can barely see. It is shown, explains Palacios to USPA News, that "the kitchen has no barriers." But 'Cooking blind' has another, even more important consequence: it makes their students feel alive.

To this contributes not only the kitchen but also the parallel activities developed by the group. On April 19, the group will prepare a menu inspired by the winning novel of the 2017 Nadal Prize: 'Media vida' (Half life), by Care Santos. Eel salad, Duck with pear and Profiteroles. "This is the first time something like this has been done on a national level," explains Angel Palacios. "The protagonists celebrate a meeting in the restaurant 'Media vida' and we will interpret the menu, how we have perceived it, with the creativity that I see in the dishes, with the collaboration of a chef because it is a very feminist work and for me it is a tribute to women, who are true fighters," he adds.

Chefs and journalists will collaborate in the elaboration of the menu, which will be attended by the author of the novel. "We do not do things to see, we will not recover sight; we make them so they can see us," explains Angel Palacios. The chef emphasizes the importance of his team: "Within the group I have fighters who are real jabatas and this workshop has given them the opportunity to have their grandchildren come back to admire them for what they cook, that at home they see mother fun again because she has a good time in the kitchen. It is a tribute to these people."

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