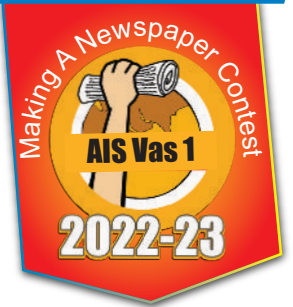


Seva on a platter

One-Of-Its-Kind Café That Spreads Kindness As Much As Yummy Food



GROUND REPORTING

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AIS Vasundhara 1, XII

Step inside Seva Café, and what catches your attention is the absence of a price column on the menu card and the bill at the end of the meal amounting to zero with a footnote: “Your meal was a gift from someone who came before you. To keep the chain of gifts alive, we invite you to pay it forward for those who dine after you.” Located in Ahmedabad City, the cafe works on the model of ‘peer to peer generosity’. Here’s a sneak peek into this initiative.

**An idea...
...soused with generosity**

Taking inspiration from Gandhiji’s ideology ‘service before self’, the café has been functioning since 2005. The inspiration is conspicuous in Gandhiji’s picture that hangs in the café where he can be seen while cooking and serving



An insight into the Seva Bhav

others. “Indian culture has a deep regard for guests and they are considered next to God, ‘Atithi Devo Bhava’, as they say. We first serve our customers, then sit with them and exchange views on topics like food, hospitality, worldly affairs etc.,” shares head chef, Raju.

**A homely ambience...
...with a dash of serenity**

As you step inside the open-air café, you can spot quotes like ‘The kingdom of God is within

you’, ‘Food plus love equals to *prasad*’ etc. “We strive to make our customers experience a serene environment. The interior of the café is placid and radiates positivity. The tables are not numbered but labelled with words like love, peace, hope and unity. Also amidst the café is a big tree and stage for the guests to share their thoughts. One can read books in the small library, and tap their feet to the rhythm of songs in a special music zone,” says Raju.

**A communal kitchen...
...with a tadka of hard work**

Talking about the functioning of the café, the head chef shares, “Our café functions from 7 PM - 10 PM and we cater to almost 40 guests. The reason being, we operate on volunteers, and we must respect their constraints. Thus, we cater to only a few guests. Our kitchen is open for anyone to volunteer who can help in cooking, serving and cleaning. Each week a special vegetarian menu is de-

signed by the volunteers for *atithis* where a combination of Continental and Indian cuisine is served. In this process, the volunteers share recipes with each other and learn to cook a variety of dishes.”

**A plate full of flavours...
...with a pinch of salt and pepper**

In the last 18 years, Seva Café has been successful in building a chain of kindness. However, the journey has seen its own share of ups and downs. “In our journey, we have been in the doldrums a few times; some related to finances and others related to discontent of people towards us,” he shares. Howbeit, overcoming all the challenges, the initiative has turned out to be a fruitful one. “We have several units in Surat, Mumbai, Delhi etc., where people have been inspired by our ideology and have stepped in this exalting initiative. We are elated to see that our ‘contribute-as-you-wish’ model has changed the mindset of people as they are quite supportive now,” he says, signing off.

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