Food unites, sharing sustains!

Today is a big day to remember the devastating earthquake that rattled southeast Turkey and northern Syria in February. It has been more than four months since the disaster, which claimed the lives of thousands and displaced millions in 12 cities and rural countryside in Turkey alone and affected areas in northern Syria. When such a calamity happens, everybody rushing to help at the first wave of shock, rebuilding and assistance tend to decline.

There is nothing like being forgotten while desperately trying to build a new life. In such times a new kick is needed. With this thought, a new initiative has been launched to restart funds coming in to give long-term support to the region.

Today in London, a unique one-day conference and fund-raiser event is being organized at the historic Old Billingsgate building, London’s former Fish Market, by Turkish food writer Cevdet Tarhan and award-winning chef Meshref Ceylan. The event titled “Cradle of Food” aims to draw attention to the food culture of the area and create a channel to raise funds to help the producers and especially women’s cooperatives in the disaster-struck area.

The highlight of the day will be a savory “Collaboration Lunch” featuring the region’s heritage dishes, prepared by leading chefs and food writers from the region and beyond. Eight long tables will be used to share the dishes prepared in different locations around the country. Each table will be led by a celebrity chef and each dish will be shared with all who want to taste the food, and hopefully, the message will reach out to the ones who wish to help. The food will be eaten by three months through the UK-based Turkiye Mozark Foundation and the local humanitarian organization Hayat Aboutok / Support to Life association.

These tables will be staffed by local and international chefs who know the cuisine of the region and the participants who will assist them. The meals will focus on traditional dishes that everyone cooks at home, with support from Guzum-Ahmad: Efe Usluk and Arakya-born chef Makar Atak, who has lost close relatives in the disaster. Nameless to say, the city of Arakya, famed for its exquisite food culture, will be the focus of the event. It has been one of the cities most affected by the earthquake, and most of the city was wiped out.

Another Arakya native Sanzur Sinem Kara, analyzing government in Turkey, is among those who have lost countless relatives and friends, including a young child. The Arakya Civilian Association, which the Arakya Civilian Association, which also from Arakya, will be helping in the kitchen, as she has from day one helping in the zone building an old kitchen.

There are world-renowned names among the chefs leading the groups. Among the prominent Turkish chefs in the UK and Ireland, Aboutok, who received two Michelin stars in Ireland, and Kemal Demiral, who is gaining a reputation in London with his newly opened The Courier, are also contributing.

Chef Mohammad Dashi, also from aboutok, will be putting his support. Chef Moheb Ahmad from Arakya’s Mehmet restaurant, who recently received the first prize of the Commander Awards Best Restaurant Book for another San Tram restaurant, will also be in the kitchen.

Appetizing food will be great with the hands of all those chefs, and souls will be soothed by the inspiring talks where a group of international speakers will take the stage in the conference section.

Most of them are old friends who have been to Turkey many times and know the cuisine of the region very well.

Ana Suman will be contributing both as a speaker and chef of the famous Boston restaurant O’Donovan. She knows the food culture in Turkey very well and brings countless food enthusiasts to Turkey every year with the Oldways group.

Aydel Muller, one of the founders of Culinary Backstreets, will discuss the theme of hospitality rightly so as he must be the one aware of the hospitality factor in Turkey as CB was first launched in Istanbul. Another inspiring talk will be given by Katlih Mokhans, who created amazing projects in Syria.

The event is a must-attend for all those who want to contribute and help those in need. Additionally, the event organizer hopes to break a world record for the largest number of people to cook a meal together. We are looking forward to seeing you there.

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