

COOKING FOR FUN

-Riddhi Doshi & Sujata Chakrabarti

On the eve of Children's Day, After Hrs decided to take five kids from the Aseema Charitable Trust, that runs a school for slum kids in Bandra, to meet chef Joy Bhattacharya at the Frangipani of Trident, Nariman Point Mumbai, to discover the secret ingredients to usher in the special day with a gastronomic delight.

While it was the first-of-its-kind experience for the excited five – Sarita, 12, Shah Rukh, 13, Shahnawaz, 12, Nitesh and Mehek, both 15 – it was indeed the same for Chef Joy. He excitedly informed us that most of the day has been spent in eager anticipation of the kids at the hotel, he says, "Since November 14 also happens to be my birthday, and a day when my own little daughter Aastha, gets to boss over me in the kitchen, what better way to usher in the special day with five kids willing to learn and experiment?"

While we asked him to whip up a special kid-friendly menu with the children, he couldn't help but reminisce about his own childhood days. He says, "Nowadays, French fries and burgers may be the hot favourites, but I can never forget my grandma's onion-seed paranthas." While paranthas may be a teeny bit difficult for kids to prepare on their own, Chef Joy and the kids set out to form a special kids platter for the day.

The choice of main course was pasta. The chef explained that it is an easy to prepare dish, prepped with the goodness of tomato and was non spicy too. It was quite interesting to note little Sarita peep from behind the shoulders of her taller friends to comment, "Oh, my mother says there is nothing more nutritious than potatoes."



Taking in stride what his little assistant suggested, Chef Joy redoubled his efforts to whisk up his next dishes – mouth watering French fries with melted cheese for garnish, along with croissants with a filling of pork sausages. Chef explains, "Croissants are ideal for snacking among kids. They are creamy and cheesy, crispy and crunchy at the same time. And French fries are an eternal favourite with kids."

Lastly, Chef Joy brought out something that he had saved for the last – scrumptious caramel custard. And the kids were only too happy to take turns to stir the caramel sugar into golden, syrupy liquid.

The dishes done, the table was laid out for the feast and there was a little tussle over which dish was better. After a few minutes of grave consultation, the verdict was announced – the caramel custard won hands down!

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