

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Community kitchens come to the aid of many



STAFF REPORTER

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 30, 2020 08:56 IST

UPDATED: MARCH 30, 2020 08:56 IST

Each canteen provides food to 250-300 persons

She has been reaching the [Kudumbashree canteen](#) near the bus-stand in the Attingal municipality by 5.30 a.m. since Wednesday. The canteen where Sobha B. used to cook is now a community kitchen which serves free food to over 250 people in the wake of the lockdown following the [COVID-19](#) situation.

Besides breakfast, lunch too is served here to people in home quarantine, migrant workers, the destitute, bedridden patients, those unable to cook for other reasons, and so on.

Used to cooking for 100 to 200 people, Sobha now finds herself cooking breakfast and lunch for many more, with the support of seven others.

“Breakfast on Friday was upumavu and banana. On Saturday, we added puttlu to the menu.”

It is hectic work. “Rice for lunch is already cooking by 7 a.m. By 11 a.m., the food has to be ready for packing.”

Municipal councillors, Kudumbashree CDS chairpersons and Kudumbashree neighbourhood group members all pitch in to help prepare the food and pack it for home delivery. As Sobha’s husband helps her out in the kitchen, food for their two children back home is also delivered from the kitchen.

The destitute come to the canteen and are given food packets by maintaining social distancing norms. In the case of the remaining people, food is delivered to to their houses.

Huge demand

The demand, Sobha says, is so much that many people had to be turned away. From Monday, they plan to serve food to all those who ask for it for ₹20.

Dharmarajan S. has been a cook for 40-odd years. He is in charge of cooking free food at the Thenguvila Devi temple auditorium in Kottukal panchayat for those affected by the lockdown.

In Kottukal, lunch was served to over 300 people on the first day of the community kitchen on Saturday. Dharmarajan started his day early and with the support of panchayat members and Kudumbashree CDS, ADS, and neighbourhood group members, got food ready and packed to be delivered by the panchayat’s vehicles.

Kottukal CDS chairperson Prasanna Kumari says the number of people they expected to serve was around 250, but on Saturday, the demand had upped to 300. This included three persons in isolation and nearly 130 in home quarantine.

THE HINDU

Though they want to serve food three times a day, financial constraints may play spoilsport. Depending on the turnout on Sunday, they will take a call on serving breakfast, at least to those who ask for it.

They have also arranged to provide food to anyone for ₹20 if they call up or message on the WhatsApp number provided by the panchayat.

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