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Dancing, discarded food combine for anti-waste Disco Soup



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At the Badaro Farmers Market, a group of volunteers prepare and hand out lemonade and tomato soup to passersby.

In that first event, 200 volunteers cooked 1.2 tons of vegetables, feeding 800 people.

Philippe Rahbe, who's French-Lebanese, founded Disco Soup Lebanon in Beirut last November.

The Disco Soup initiative is on a much more modest scale in Beirut.

Rahbe has plans to take Disco Soup beyond Badaro. During the last event, he was approached by a local circus organization interested in hosting a

Aina De Lapparent Alvarez | The Daily Star

BEIRUT: At the Badaro Farmers Market, a group of volunteers prepare and hand out lemonade and tomato soup to passersby.

One volunteer, Christelle Doumit, a sustainable business developer, says she is always asked the same question: "Why is it free?"

The answer: Because the recipe for the "Disco Soup" event simply involves discarded food, a few volunteers, a public space and a good playlist to dance to.

"Only today, we've rescued more than 50 kilos of vegetables from a [local vegetable market] which were going to be thrown away," Doumit says. Donations are also accepted to cover the costs of buying tables and kitchen utensils.

The concept of spreading awareness about food waste by chopping vegetables while dancing to music started in 2012 in Berlin. In that first event, 200 volunteers cooked 1.2 tons of vegetables, feeding 800 people. Since then, it has become a global movement across four continents and more than 40 countries.

Philippe Rahbe, who's French-Lebanese, founded Disco Soup Lebanon in Beirut last November.



Disco Soup, hoping to gather a higher number of volunteers and reach more young people.

He has since organized six of the events in partnership with MakeSense Lebanon Hotspot, the local hub of a Paris-based global social enterprise community, and Foodblessed, a local hunger-relief initiative.

Rahbe had previously volunteered for Disco Soups in Lyon, France. He was inspired to launch one in Lebanon after taking up work at an organic produce shop in Beirut and seeing firsthand all the unsold vegetables that were cast off at the end of the day.

The Disco Soup initiative is on a much more modest scale in Beirut.

It happens monthly and involves five to 10 volunteers each time, mainly students or young professionals. The preparations are kept simple: juices and salads. They also avoid using dairy products, meat and fish due to the potential health hazards. Since November, 200 kilograms of vegetables have been saved.

Doumit says she joined because she saw it as the first step she could take to act on food waste.

In response to criticism that the event was being held at an organic Sunday market in a middle-class neighborhood rather than geared toward food-insecure communities, she stresses that the aim is mainly to raise awareness of food waste. "Lots of NGOs do events for people in need. However, [people in need] are not necessarily those throwing away food. The middle class is much more unaware. But of course, anyone who passes by can grab what we make."

A similar project was initiated by activist Diana Fayad and ACT (Active Advocacy of Communities for Tomorrow), a local NGO.

In January, they organized the "Eat, Save, Love" gourmet dinner at Sin al-Fil restaurant Garden State, cooking for 100 people with leftovers collected from Spinneys.

Rahbe has plans to take Disco Soup beyond Badaro. During the last event, he was approached by a local circus organization interested in hosting a Disco Soup, hoping to gather a higher number of volunteers and reach more young people.

But for the long term, he says, "a great measure of success would be to disappear."

A version of this article appeared in the print edition of The Daily Star on May 25, 2019, on page 2.

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