

Beat: Lifestyle

## **We do not give credit many times to what we are capable of doing**

**Angel Palacios, chef**

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**USPA NEWS** - Angel Palacios lives by and for the kitchen. Vocational chef, professor at the School of Kitchen and with a bright future, all this was cut short when, in 2007, he suffered a retinal detachment and almost completely lost his sight. Before him opened a world of shadows, far away from what had been his life until then between pots. But it did not collapse and, after a first moment of denial, launched in the National Organization of the Spanish Blind (ONCE in its acronym in Spanish) the project 'Cooking blind'. He has recovered his passion for cooking, but now he also helps other people like him to overcome the difficulties of blindness and cooking. They form a great team, unique in Spain. Together they create exquisite dishes.

### **\_Can we cook without the sense of sight?**

\_Yes! I have the best team in the world. They reinforce my idea that this is possible. I spent in the kitchen my return to life. I structured it on the foundations of the kitchen. When it happened to me ...

### **\_When it was?**

\_In 2007-2008. I had been teaching cooking, services and cafeteria in the Cooking School for twenty years. Besides, I had worked in countless restaurants, I had done projects just as we now collaborate in music, in what they ask us to collaborate. First to demonstrate that the kitchen has no barriers and then to demonstrate that we are alive. I used to be like that before, but for two years of my life, after having taken such a fat stick, I have a time of denial in which I say: "this can not be happening to me." To me, personally, the kitchen took me out of this. The kitchen and ONCE.

### **\_There was to learn again, despite having a previous career.**

\_The other day, talking to [the chef] Elena Arzak, she defined me very quickly. He told me: "It is that you are a guide cook for them." No one has defined me so easily. He told me: "you are a chef who has lived in the kitchen all your life, you are explaining it to him from your point of view and you make a guide, you make a kitchen guide." It seemed so nice to me that someone defines it in such a simple way! Is that the kitchen is a language and is how we communicate here. Taste we all have, memories of cooking we all have since childhood... Unite that for people who have closed the door of these memories for the mere fact that nothing happens to them, it is so sad! The other day I left here excited. There was one of the girls who almost burst into tears because it was the first Spanish omelet she made after losing her sight.

### **\_It seems very difficult. If we close our eyes and try to cook as they do ...**

\_Do not! Difficult is to return from death. It is that you do it in a very short period of time. You, in seconds, want to put yourself in a situation that to me, life has put me in a period of time. There are two years of my life that I do not remember details, even on a personal level. I am very united to my family, my wife and my children are all for me, and I am saddened to say that I do not remember birthdays. And now I'm going to make the pies again. I do what I did before and I am very proud of what I have achieved.

### **\_How long has Cooking blind been running?**

\_Eight years. We really started very soon. Carlos, the social cultural animator of ONCE, was insisting. I was very afraid of security.

**\_ For whom is it more difficult?**

\_For me it is very simple. I manifest the passion I feel for something I like since I was a child. For me it's as simple as talking to you, if we talk about cooking it does not cost me anything. To them, at first, taking that step costs them a lot for security, for fear... but then, once that is crossed... It is not often given credit to what we are capable of doing. I, on social networks, receive thousands of messages of admiration for what they are capable of doing. Because it's them! I explain what I do, I explain techniques and I give them the option to do it. For them, this is super rewarding. There are roles. Today, when we have entered, I have told Antonio: "light the ovens" because I am incapable, I do not see the lights. I'm just not worth anything. Without a crew, there is no boat that works. There may be three captains, but without a crew the ship is not going anywhere. Before doing any project, I always consult it. There are times that we are preparing a project for four days.

**\_ And, at the end of the class, they eat what they have cooked.**

\_There are two rules: one is that they have to prove everything we do, like it or not. And another is to take care of who takes care of us: we always leave a small portion for the person who helps us with the cleaning. We are a collective that has to be very grateful.

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