

by **Ritu Bhatia**

THE very thought of leaving eggs out of any recipe for cake is frightening for any cook. Bakers rely on eggs to bind ingredients and give the cake its fluffy texture. Eggs add flavour and richness to a cake, but more importantly they are responsible for much of its structure. Anyone who's tried to make an eggless cake will tell you what a challenge this is. The truth is that a non-vegetarian, egg-loving person like me — who could live on cake (literally) — has always scoffed at the idea that a cake made without eggs could taste anywhere near as good as one with them.

Or so I imagined till I tasted the eggless cake made at the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Delhi. This almost melts in the mouth. Of the three kinds available, I like the coconut cake the best. You can almost taste the fresh coconut in this. The plain variety is also good, though some don't care for the undisguised

Leave out the eggs and throw in some love instead

flavour of the wheat flour. All baked goods at the ashram shop (cake, biscuits and bread) are made from whole wheat flour, pure *ghee* or groundnut oil, and unrefined sugar or honey.

These impart a unique texture and flavour to everything, apart from adding to the nutritional value. It's true that this cake is denser than it would be if there

were eggs in the recipe but this doesn't detract from its deliciousness. The cake is sold in packages that contain four small pieces, for about Rs 20.

More recently, I ate a variety of eggless cakes at the Isha Foundation café, Pepper Vine, at the ashram in Coimbatore. Named by Sadhguru, the founder of Isha (he has a pepper vine farm behind his

house), the café has several snacks made in the ashram kitchen, and is open to the public.

Of the three kinds of cake here — carrot, nut and chocolate — my favourite is the carrot variety, which is sweet and spicy all at once. Like the cake at the Aurobindo Ashram, this too melts in the mouth, and can be enjoyed for a mere Rs 10 a piece. This too is



COURTESY: ISHA FOUNDATION

Usha Rao says its love in the cake that makes it so good

made of wheat flour. Sunflower oil and milk make up the rest of their recipe. Usha Rao, a meta-physicist by profession who runs the café, says that this cake was added to their menu some years back. "Cake is integral to our ashram menu since we run a school and children enjoy snacks like this," she says.

When I raise my concerns about the "egglessness" of the cakes, she merely smiles. "We cook with love and devotion here in the ashram," she declares, "which is why food here tastes so good and it doesn't matter that neither eggs nor garlic or ginger is used in our preparations." Her theory makes sense: Now I understand why the eggless cake I have eaten at both ashrams is truly delicious. The chief ingredient is love, present in abundance.

Cake-loving vegetarian friends tell me that the eggless chocolate truffle cake at The Big Chill is also divine, though expensive at Rs 120 a slice. If you are seeking some cheaper satisfaction, you can head to Nathu's pastry shop for a variety of eggless cakes and pastries. Or order Chocó Lava from Domino's at just Rs 40 a piece.