

Louisville Restaurant To Welcome Refugees For Thanksgiving Meal

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In the days following the attacks in Paris, Vanessa Cantley's Facebook feed was irking her. She found a flood of status updates on the topic of allowing refugees into the country — many of them negative.

"I was just so sad about it," she said.

Cantley said she believed the views didn't reflect how Louisvillians generally feels about refugees resettling in the city. She began thinking of ways she could help.

Cantley is a co-owner of El Camino, a Mexican cantina on Bardstown Road. The restaurant is usually closed on Thanksgiving, but this year the eatery will open to more than 100 refugees from Syria, Iraq, Cuba, Somalia and other countries.

Soon after the attacks in Paris earlier this month, American political leaders began an intense debate over refugees. The debate focused specifically on refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria. Several governors have said they oppose allowing Syrian refugees into their states, at least until security measures can be examined. Meanwhile, the U.S. House overwhelmingly approved tighter screening requirements for Syrian refugees.

Cantley said she brought her idea to her El Camino business partners, and they were receptive.

"It was, 'We're doing this,'" she said. "And it caught fire."

The restaurant's staff is helping, a whole lamb has been donated and Kentucky Refugee Ministries is helping facilitate the gathering, she said. But despite the support, she said volunteers are being sought to help prepare side dishes, serve, clean, entertain kids and provide vehicles for transportation.

Dishes should adhere with Halal standards. Each dish should also be accompanied by a list of ingredients, she said.

And she stressed that anyone interested in helping should get in touch with a volunteer coordinator first and not just show up. The restaurant is closed to the public on Thursday.

To find out how to get involved, contact Susie Hoyt by emailing susie@whiskeybythedrink.com.



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<http://wfpl.org/louisville-restaurant-welcome-refugees-thanksgiving-meal/>