



Leonard Torine preparing to order lunch in the café operated by the NCC School of Culinary Arts in Newark

This NCC Volunteer Is a “Culinary” Delight

Leonard Torine was born and raised in Newark, where he recalls working in his father Sol’s superette on what was then Belmont Avenue. He would rise before 6 a.m., even as a 10-year-old, and accompany his father down to Chapel Street, where they would buy fresh produce two or three days a week.

“There were no child labor laws in those days and I enjoyed every moment of it,” said

Torine, who worked in his father’s store throughout his teenage and college years.

In his adulthood, Torine would open a chain of restaurants, called Diet Works, and later his own manufacturing business, Veggieland, that sold natural and low calorie food to supermarkets and restaurants nationwide.

“We made about 30 different flavors of veggie burgers,” he explained.

Torine, of East Hanover, has since given up the business, but at 66-years-old, he is today the executive director of the American Vegetarian Association, an organization that certifies vegetarian food. It was while reading The Star-Ledger this past summer that Torine spotted a story on New Community’s School of Culinary Arts. It prompted him to contact school instructor Jonathan Butler.

“He knows the industry, that’s for sure,” said Butler, who immediately invited Torine to become a member of the school’s advisory board.

Since then, Torine has donated everything from food processors and cutlery sets to hand mixers, blenders, cheese graters and even a meat cleaver to the school, which offers a seven month program of study.

“I think it’s wonderful what they’re doing here,” he said. “I was very impressed on my first visit. Everything was clean and the students are very professional.”

With most meals in the school’s Culinary Café selling for just \$3.50, Torine also ordered lunch on a recent afternoon--baked tilapia with crabmeat in a basil butter sauce, accompanied by buttered white rice and peas.

“It’s very good, juicy,” Torine said as he took his first bite. “Everything is cooked just right and delicious.”

For more information on how to donate your services or equipment to the NCC School of Culinary Arts, contact the NCC Workforce Development Center at 973 824-6484.

The Culinary Café is located in NCC’s Extended Care Center at 266 South Orange Ave.

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