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Triangle Food Tour takes to downtown Cary

BY ELIZABETH SHESTAK, Correspondent

CARY - Triangle Food Tour is starting a new route that includes Eastern European cuisine, authentic Cuban fare and an honest to goodness soda fountain.

Starting Saturday, Leigh Eckle and her husband Peter, founders of Triangle Food Tour, are introducing another three-hour journey that will sample six to eight eateries - all locally owned - in downtown Cary.

"You walk, talk, eat and sip your way around town," said Leigh Eckle. "I think there are little hidden gems in downtown Cary."

One such gem is historic Ashworth Drugs, founded in 1957 on West Chatham Street.

Manager Paul Ashworth, whose parents opened the place, said many folks in Cary consider the area around Preston Corners to be the central part of town.

He hopes this tour introduces residents, new and old alike, to the old business district. Tourgoers will get to sample a fountain treat from his venue.

Perhaps a cherry coke float?

"All of the places that we stop are locally owned, mom and pop places," Eckle said. "Some stops offer an appetizer with a sample drink, or small plate of an entree or a sweet dessert."

'Scene is growing'

The Eckles, who founded the company in 2008 as a spin-off of their other business, Associate Arrangements, are hesitant to divulge the specifics on potential tour stops aside from Ashworth Drug and its soda fountain, but insist folks will be pleasantly surprised with the quality and variety of the food.

Howard Johnson, president of the Cary Chamber of Commerce, is not surprised a food tour has come to town.

"Our scene is growing here," he said of the foodie craze. "We get a lot of inquiries of new restaurants looking in our market."

Branching out

The May tour has already sold out, Eckle said.

But no worries - tours will run once a month to start on Saturdays at 2 p.m., and will include up to 10 people.

Groups will meet at the Cary Train Depot, and the cost is \$28 per person, plus a \$2.50 service charge.

Tours will be rescheduled if the weather is severe, and folks should remember to wear comfortable shoes - half

the tour will be on foot.

Triangle Food Tour started out sampling menus in Raleigh and, more recently, Chapel Hill and Durham.

The Eckles, who have lived in Cary since moving to the state in 1994, thought Cary was the next logical tour.

It's the center of the Triangle, after all.

Like all of its tours, the Cary route will include lots of history in addition to food and drink. Guides will share stories, friends could be made, and tourgoers will hopefully learn a thing or two.

"We tell them to keep an open mind and an open mouth," Eckle said.

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