

Causing a stir in the kitchen

Children tend to eat whatever's presented on the plate in front of them, with their idea of helping in the kitchen being to stay well out of it.

But with weekly domestic science lessons given a low priority at most schools, where do youngsters learn about good nutrition and preparing a meal?

The answer is the Healthy Schools Programme, which has been introduced in 16 senior schools across the city.

Pupils at St Mary Redcliffe School are chatting as they chop, pour, fry and assemble.

Ben Russell, aged 13, is so keen on lessons such as this that he's determined to become a chef.

Today, he's putting together a mushroom and chickpea curry, although he admits: "I hate chickpeas. I like spicy food but you can't beat a good old-fashioned English roast dinner."

"I started cooking four years ago and it's what I want to do when I leave school. I do a lot at home, including my own baking. I've experimented with starters and desserts. Next, it will be mains."

The cookery sessions are run by freelance chef and nutrition expert Francine Russell. She visits each school twice, while teachers talk to pupils before and after sessions, using an Eat Well Plate to highlight how much carbohydrate, protein, fat, vegetables and fruit they should be tucking into.

Francine said: "The children have really enjoyed the lessons and I'd love schools to start after-school cookery clubs to carry on the message."

Teacher Francesca Milling said: "The students love Jamie Oliver and are so interested in these sessions, we had a waiting list."

"If we had a cookery club, I could fill it every day because this is the first time they can go wild in the aisles."

"We asked children to keep a food diary but as that can be very personal, they didn't have to show me, and we sent parents a questionnaire

Since Jamie Oliver tackled school dinners, pupils have been keen to sharpen their cooking skills. **Melanie Greenwood** reports on healthy Cook and Taste sessions in 16 Bristol schools.



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to see if the healthy eating message has gone home."

Kirsty Davies, 13, said: "I like cooking and do a bit at home but only what I've done in school — this makes me more confident to try recipes out."

Emily Murryfield, 13, enjoys the social side of

cooking with 10 classmates, saying: "It's good fun to work together and make something new that doesn't involve chips."

"I don't do cooking at home, I just don't think about it, but after this I'd like to."

It seems this lack of cooking at home is a recurring theme. Lucy Crystal, senior health promotion specialist based at Southmead Hospital, is promoting the Cook and Taste sessions, and she's found that time and time again the children said they either weren't wanted in the kitchen, or eventually, weren't interested.

Lucy said: "These sessions have had been very positive and we hope they carry on at home."

There was certainly a lot of fun and laughter in the kitchen, where everyone was pulling together, while Francine gave clear orders, in a firm but very un-Gordon Ramsay way.

The real surprise was that the trail of wall-to-wall mess was missing. Even the girl whose eyes were streaming from cutting onions wiped as she wept.

Future supercook Ben said: "I try to clean as I go. I know I'll have to work my way up from washer-upper in a restaurant, but that's what I want to do, and my parents are 100 per cent behind me."

I bet they are, with their plates held out and their feet up, because they won't have to stand the heat of the kitchen with Ben in it.



Chef Francine Russell with St Mary Redcliffe School pupils; left, a cookery lesson; below, Jamie Oliver serves up some healthy meals for his Jamie's School Dinners programme



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Three Cook and Taste recipes for you to try at home

Sweet Potato Curry

- Ingredients**
- 2 tbsps curry paste
 - 1 onion, chopped
 - 500g potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
 - 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
 - 600ml low-salt vegetable stock
 - 400ml can low-fat coconut milk
 - 200g frozen peas

- Method**
1. Heat the curry paste in a large pan and stir in the onion.
 2. Cover and cook for five minutes, stirring occasionally, until softened.
 3. Add chopped potatoes, stock and coconut milk, and bring to the boil.
 4. Reduce heat and simmer for 15-20 minutes until the potato has softened, but do not over stir as the potato may start to break up.
 5. Add frozen peas, bring back to the boil and simmer for five minutes more.
 6. Season to taste.

Mushroom and Chickpea Curry

- Ingredients**
- 2 tbsps sunflower oil
 - 1 medium onion, peeled, finely sliced or chopped
 - 250g mushrooms, wiped and cut into quarters
 - 2 tbsps any type of curry paste
 - 2 tbsps tomato puree
 - 400g can chickpeas drained
 - 400ml can coconut milk
 - Handful of fresh coriander chopped

- Method**
1. Heat oil in large saucepan, add chopped onions and mushrooms, lightly fry for 2-3 minutes.
 2. Add curry paste, tomato puree and stir.
 3. Add chickpeas and coconut milk, simmer for 20 minutes
 4. Taste, to see if it needs seasoning. If the sauce seems a little thick, add 3-4 tablespoons of water.
- To serve: Pile the chickpea and mushroom curry into a serving dish and sprinkle with the coriander. Serve immediately with warm naan bread and rice or couscous.

Baked Fruit Kebab

- Ingredients**
- 1 orange, peeled and cut into chunks

- 2 kiwi fruit, peeled and cut into chunks
- 1 banana, peeled and cut into pieces
- 8 pineapple chunks
- 15 grapes
- 250ml pomegranate juice
- A sprinkling of brown sugar

- Method**
1. Preheat the oven to 180°C, 350°F, Gas Mark 4.
 2. Pour the pomegranate juice in a bowl large enough to hold the fruit.
 3. Add the prepared fruit and coat well.
 4. Thread onto skewers, put onto a baking pan, sprinkle a little brown sugar over and bake for 10-15 minutes, until the fruit is bubbling.

