



From left, Chisom Ekeh, Claire Madge, Geraldine Herbert and Tracy Manley at their cookery class

Recipes ...

Poached pears in cinnamon grape juice
Ingredients:
 4 firm and ripe pears, peeled, cored and quartered
 400ml red grape juice
 1 tspn ground cinnamon and 1 tspn honey.
 Greek yoghurt to serve

Method:
 1. Put juice and cinnamon in medium sized saucepan, bring to boil for two minutes.
 2. Turn down the heat and put in pears, cover saucepan with lid and simmer for 20 minutes
 3. Turn pears several times during cooking, remove with slotted spoon and place in dish
 4. Boil the juice for a couple of minutes to reduce slightly, then pour over pears. It tastes even better the next day. To serve, top with Greek yoghurt.

Courgette chickpea and pasta soup
Ingredients (serves four):
 2 cans chickpeas
 2 tbsp sunflower oil
 2 leeks finely sliced and halved
 2 garlic cloves chopped
 2, 400g tins of chopped tomatoes or passata
 1 tbsp tomato puree
 850ml water or stock
 90g small pasta shapes (optional, and wholewheat is best for its extra fibre content)

Method:
 1. Heat oil in pan over medium heat and gently fry onions and garlic
 2. Stir in chopped tomatoes, courgette and tomato puree, add stock
 3. Add cans of chickpeas and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes
 4. Add pasta and cook until tender, approximately 10 minutes
 5. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary. No salt is needed if you've used stock.



Above, Chisom at her cookery classes; right, Geraldine is shown a few tricks of the trade by Francine Russell



Competition

Does your family eat enough fruit and veg? Would you like advice and recipes on how to eat at least five portions-a-day, with up to £100 worth of food covering breakfast, lunch and dinner?
 Then enter the Evening Post and Eating In Colour's competition to boost your family's health, swapping your usual shopping list and letting us know how you get on with a family daily diary.
 Eat In Colour, is a new campaign by the Fresh Produce Consortium, which represents producers, packers, importers, wholesale and retailers who want to make it easier to pick up fruit and vegetables.
 Campaign chairman Anthony Levy said: "The prospect of slaving over a hot stove after a busy day is simply too much, but healthy eating needn't be an ordeal."
 "Eat In Colour is about bringing colour to family mealtimes, with easy ways to include fruit and vegetables."
 Amazingly, Brits spend a meagre £8 a week on fruit and veg — about 2.7 portions daily.
 The Eat In Colour campaign shows plenty of simple ways to prepare, cook and enjoy fruit and vegetables.
 If you win, experts at Eat In Colour will provide your family with an easy-to-follow meal plan, all you have to do is tell us about your lifestyle, keep a daily diary, charting your success and we'll catch up with you to see how you've done.
 To win, just tell us why your family needs a helping hand and write to: **Mel Greenwood, Features Department, Temple Way, Bristol, BS99 7HD**
 Offer excludes alcohol and tobacco. *Usual Evening Post terms and conditions apply*
 For more information on the campaign log on to www.eatincolour.com

Top cooking tips

Celebrity Chef, Brian Turner, gives his top tips for boosting fruit and veg portions:
Tip 1
 "Why not grate carrot, beetroot and courgette in your mince meat bolognese sauce. It's an easy way to get three portions of great tasting veg into a family favourite."
Tip 2
 "Grate cabbage, carrot and onion in to a bowl. Stir in mayonnaise and hey presto, your very own home-made coleslaw."
Tip 3
 "Roasted vegetables couldn't be easier — peel and cut potatoes, parsnip, beetroot, sweet potatoes and carrots in to little chunks. Pop in a baking tray and toss in olive oil. Roast in the oven for 40 minutes."
Tip 4
 "Skewer pieces of onion, courgette, mushroom and pepper. Drizzle with a little olive oil and pop under the grill for a few minutes."
Tip 5
 "Drain a tin of sweetcorn and toast under the grill until golden. The sweetcorn kernels take on a nutty flavour and are wonderful sprinkled over salads."



Tracy and community kitchen co-ordinator Ian Borland

Choose VEG

“I'm hooked on cooking now, and love finding ways of sneaking in extra veg – the children haven't even noticed.**”**

There's no disguising the flaking dark steel gate, it's a squat, cold, dim and utterly charmless space, with broken windows and scrubby grass patches.
 Through the high railings, past the reinforced dark steel gate, it's a squat, cold, dim and utterly charmless space, with broken windows and scrubby grass patches.
 But through another shabby mesh door you step into the new community kitchen — a light, lovely, warm space, filled with women chatting and laughing as they chop, slice and stir.
 Bustling around is Francine, multi-tasking queen of cooks, watched by her very attentive pupils, none of whom have had a lesson since school.
 She talks about sneaking extra vegetables into children's meals, sprinkles Bristol's Bart's spices and herbs to add flavour and advises on how to cut down on fats, salt, and sugar, barely pausing for breath as she sweeps, measures and cleans.
 There's even a creche next door for mums who want the chance to cook without sticky little fingers all over them and every surface.
 Over this hands-on two hours, a nutritious

Francine Russell is on a mission — to teach us all how to cook tasty, nutritious food which is easy and fun to prepare. She talks to Melanie Greenwood about the course she runs in Knowle West called Cooking From Scratch

feast is created that costs a pittance at £1.50 a head, and everyone is pleased as punch as they share dishes and parcel them up, because there's the added bonus of not having to cook dinner later.
 Francine says: "When we first put on a course before Christmas, we were instantly oversubscribed and had to turn people away. We've run 10 courses now, and it's been a fantastic success."
 Geraldine Herbert, 25, is six months pregnant, so wants to eat healthily for her new baby and put together fast, easy food that her five and three-year-olds will love and thrive on.
 Cooking poached pears in cinnamon grape

juice, she says: "I've never done anything like this before. I never had a clue how to. I didn't even cook at school because I used to get into trouble, and I knew before I started here that my diet was high in salt and fat.
 "My son may have to go on a no-wheat diet, so I want to know how to cook for him, and it's lovely to get out of the house and be here together."
 In July last year, Bristol City Council's Food Safety Team and Bristol Primary Care Trust beat 67 other groups from across the country to win a bid from the Food Standards Agency to fund a series of cooking skills sessions, with Francine as the lynchpin.

Classes were initially aimed at teenagers and young parents to help them produce healthy, affordable and tasty meals.
 They've cooked Thai and Indian curries, pizza and frittata, minestrone soup, healthy burgers, shakes and smoothies, plus Christmas cookery, including apple and mincemeat strudel, spiced red cabbage and roasted parsnip soup.
 And new friendships have been made, too, for while Francine, sails through the recipes, talking about beneficial foods and why it pays to shop seasonally, there's a lovely, lively social feel to sessions. It's seems as constructive for mental health as it is for a family's physical benefit.
 Claire Madge, a 29-year-old mum-of-two, is putting together a ratatouille of slow-roasted vegetables, topped with low-fat sausages.
 She says: "I learned to cook with my aunt and gran, but I found I was dishing up the same cottage pies, chicken and Bolognese time and again.
 "I'd never have tried making ratatouille at home, and it's not the same when you look at a cook book — sometimes it seems like a foreign language — and those food programmes are too quick. I love Francine's simple, step-by-step

instructions, and usually a recipe only takes 15 minutes to prepare and the same to cook — just what I need with the children.
 "My favourite was a cheesecake which I made at home. Although my attempt was a lot thinner-looking, it tasted lovely."
 Tracy Manley, 40, who has three children, is stirring a quick minestrone soup — Francine's perfect answer to boosting vegetables in children's diets.
 Tracy says: "I've never made this before, it's lovely and something I'll try at home. I'm hooked on cooking now, and love finding ways of sneaking in extra veg — the children haven't even noticed."
 Chisom Ekeh, 30, who has two young children in the creche, is making couscous-stuffed peppers with mushroom, Feta cheese, cumin, coriander and sun dried tomatoes.
 She says: "I'm cooking more at home, and the pizza we made here is healthy, which the children enjoy, too."
 The only man, more than able to take the heat of the kitchen, is chef Ian Borland, who's happy with the baking banter and supports women who feel too shy to work in a group. He says: "For

some, just getting the confidence and feeling less isolated is important, so I help them through that stage."
 Next on the list is an outing to Windmill Hill City Farm to learn about herbs they can grow, transforming their kitchen windowsills and cooking.
 Francine, who has worked for eight years as a food consultant, also runs a slow food market stall in Corn Street.
 "When we started, I asked everyone to keep a food diary, and they realised a lot of what they ate was energy-dense — high in fat, sugar and salt. Now that's changing, and this project's been a great way to break down barriers.
 "Cooking in a team gives you confidence to try new things. It's a myth that it's difficult. I believe it's vital to know what's in your food, to check labels and use fresh, seasonal ingredients."
● Sadly, funding for Francine runs out in March, but there should still be more sessions on offer with chef Ian Borland. For more details, call 0117 9639 569. To contact Francine Russell, email francinefood@blueyonder.co.uk

