



COOKERY COURSES IN SOMERSET

BY ROSIE INGE

There was a ripple of self-congratulations around each of the tables – from Keinton Mandeville's Village Hall to the friendly Bertinet Kitchen in Bath, and Pophams elegant dining room at Hunstrete House – when satisfied pupils consumed the proceeds of a morning's hard work.

When I first started researching this article, I had no idea there was such a variety of courses available and the range of subject matter is so wide that we have to publish it in two parts, so the next issue in December will cover Rosie Davies' comprehensive four-week course, the warm kitchen of Annamma's Kerala cooking and Vanilla & Spice.

MANGE-TOO AT HUNSTRETE HOUSE, PENSFORD, NR BATH MATT LORD
£45 for course and lunch with wine
01761 490 490

I'm a good cook and my food tastes good, but I can't for the life of me make it look anything more than spoonfuls of meat, veg, whatever on a plate. Or I couldn't until I went to a cookery demonstration at Hunstrete House near Pensford. There are three reasons for attending one of youthful Matt Lord's events: he loves cooking, he loves teaching and the house is just gorgeous.

It's a terrific group activity and is made more fun by interaction between the scholars. After an excellent cup of coffee and very moreish home-made biscuits in the elegant drawing room, we gathered in the Garden room which was all beautifully laid out – little pots containing all the ingredients parading beside mixing bowls and chopping knives. We were soon rakishly attired in smart white Hunstrete House chef's apron and hat (which we took home afterwards – a nice touch).

Matt stood at the end of the room and led us through each recipe; if we needed help or encouragement, he was there; if we didn't he still made us feel we were on our way to culinary stardom.

The menu for the day featured Seared Blue Fin Tuna steak (Sashimi Grade) with crisp anchovies in Guinness batter, baby leaf salad, a light and zesty herb and lime couscous and a seriously tasty salsa verde followed by the vanilla and lime pannacotta with exotic fruit compote. We each prepared our own lunch – only the tuna was cooked elsewhere. Everything tasted sublime. Three of the dishes were previously untried in the Inge kitchen – the salsa verde, couscous and pannacotta. I've made them all myself since then and each was as good as at Hunstrete – that's not bad considering my dining room isn't as gracious as theirs.

Vanilla & Lime Pannacotta with exotic fruit compote
100ml dbl cream
25ml milk
¼ lime zest
½ vanilla pod
1 leaf gelatine
10g castor sugar
½ kiwi
¼ pineapple
½ banana
½ mango + ½ mango pureed

Place the cream and milk in a saucepan, add the lime zest, scrape the seeds from the vanilla pod and add and bring the contents of the pan to the boil. Soak the gelatine leaf in cold water until soft, then squeeze the water and put it with the sugar in a bowl; pour over the hot cream mixture;

pass through a fine sieve, pour into moulds, cover with cling film and set in the fridge for 1 hour. Neatly dice all the fruit, bind with the mango coulis, finely chop the mint and mix into the compote. Gently turn out the pannacotta and decorate the plate with a ring of the fruits.

COOKING FOR HEALTH KEINTON MANDEVILLE VILLAGE HALL, NR SOMERTON

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£65.00 per course; 10% discount for booking all seven

Dr Jane Philpott MA MSc PhD is a softly spoken, passionate advocate of the power of natural food, and bases her classes on the healing power of cooking and the energetics of food. As well as being a qualified cookery teacher, she spent 22 years studying, researching and working on the global production of food, 14 years of which were as a senior R&D manager in industry, before beginning her training to degree level as a Nutritional Therapist.

Recent research shows that 90% of people believe they eat healthily but only 10% were found to consume all the nutrients their bodies need. The Government recommends eating five portions of fruit and vegetables per day but in reality we should consume more than 10. 40% of people who go into hospital are undernourished but a staggering 70% of people coming OUT of hospital are undernourished. 60% of the population are overweight. Threatening statistics.

One of her students said he 'put the right fuel into his bike but not always in me'. Ages vary from 17 to 70 and reasons for coming range from ME and depression sufferers to a café owner who wanted to know more on the scientific side, and people who just want to take control of this part of their lives. One lady has attended eight of the courses, repeating her favourites.

The first two of the seven courses cover the Fundamentals of Healthy Eating. Managing your Weight Naturally, Food & Emotions, Balancing Hormones Naturally, Beating Stress & Fatigue, and Boosting Your Immune System complete the group. Each class costs £65 with a 10% discount for the complete package.

I selected the latter and spent the day absolutely fascinated by what Jane had to say. Ancient wisdom and modern science teach us that the quality of the food we eat is intrinsically linked with our level of health and well being. Radical changes in the production and processing of food have taken place too swiftly for the human genome to adjust and there is growing scientific evidence that the evolutionary collision of our ancient genome with the nutritional qualities of recently introduced foods underlies many of the chronic diseases of Western civilization such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Two hours in the morning covered the make up of the immune system and how our modern-day food system does it no favours, and during the two hours following lunch we discussed immune-boosting foods.

We split into groups of two to cook two or three different dishes (in my case, borscht, millet & salmon croquettes, Casserole de Puy, crunchy green beans in fennel dressing, arame with asparagus & shiitake, roasted butternut squash with red onions and fruit kebabs with spiced pear and tahini dip) which we all shared together.

Arame with Asparagus & Shiitake
½ packet arame (delicious sea vegetable with a sweet flavour)
bunch finely chopped spring onions
3 tbl olive oil
shiitake mushrooms (soaked for 20 minutes & sliced)
bunch asparagus
carrot (cut into matchsticks)
1 cup water

Rosie Inge demonstrates that you can do it





- 2cm piece fresh root ginger
- 1 tbl mirin (fermented rice)
- 1 tbl tamar (wheat-free soy sauce)
- few drops toasted sesame oil
- 2 tsp apple juice
- lightly toasted sesame seeds.

Soak arame in water for 15 minutes & drain. Heat oil in a wok, then add arame, spring onions, mushrooms, carrots & asparagus. Stir-fry for a few minutes then add water, mirin, soya sauce, sesame oil and apple juice. Simmer gently for 10 minutes Season with ginger juice & garnish with toasted sesame seeds.



a tickle and a chuckle in there too. He is, however, adamant that his pupils measure all the ingredients – on an electronic weighing machine if possible. Then with his Bertinet scraper (a 4" stiff plastic slice with curved edges on one side – for sale at the astronomical price of £3.50), you blend, push and cut the flour, yeast and salt until all is incorporated into a sticky mess. Turn it out onto the clean – and unfloured – surface, and off you go. Swaying forward and back with the whole body, gather, lift, turn over and slap onto the table; and repeat.

After a while, an order comes to the mass; it accommodates your fingers when you lift and stretch, almost as if IT wants to please YOU. It's ready when it no longer sticks to the surface. Result! 'Don't fear the dough,' says Bertinet. 'The worst you can get is sticky hands.'

He first covered his hands in flour at the age of 12 with his uncle who baked bread in Quiberon, Brittany. He loved everything about it, mostly the smell, and started working in a bakery at the age of 14. After three years in the Army and a few seasons as a ski bum, in 1988 he came to England for a holiday, met his wife Jo – and here he is.

We made two types of dough

and baked several varieties of bread: the basic recipe provided interesting bread sticks, focaccia and loaves, and the olive oil dough was turned into focaccia and pizza, the latter eternally different from anything you will eat in a Hut or Express. While we consumed our first glass of wine and divided the dough into the bread tins, the efficient assistants quickly turned the cooking stations into a long table, laid for lunch with a glorious spread of rustic French food, including the results of our morning's labours.

He's had around 2000 students through the Bertinet Kitchen, one a grandmother who brought her autistic grandson: he had never smiled until he buried his hands into a ball of dough and later watched it transform miraculously into bread.

'Dough gets you hooked into bread. Crust gets you addicted.' Good words to go home with.

I wouldn't advocate buying the scraper (I bought one, lost it and make do rather better with a stiff kitchen scraper and cheese slicer) but his book 'Dough' is well worth it at £19.99 since it comes with a useful video.

White Dough for Small Rolls
10g yeast (fresh if possible)
500g strong bread flour
10g salt
350g water

Pre-heat the oven to 250c. rub the yeast into the flour using your fingertips. Add the salt and water. Hold the bowl

with one hand and mix the ingredients around with the other for 2-3 minutes until the dough starts to form. With the scraper lift the spongy ball onto the work surface. Don't be tempted to add any flour.

Now work the mixture, stretching and folding to trap the air inside. Keep lifting, folding, flipping and slapping until you have a perfect replica of a baby's bottom – soft and squdgy. Allow to rest in a large, lightly floured bowl covered with a linen cloth, in a warm place until it is roughly double the size. After around an hour, add any extra flavourings (nuts, olives, seeds etc).

Then turn it out onto the surface and divide into three. Flatten the dough with the heel of your hand into a rough oval shape. Fold one side of the flattened dough into the middle and use the heel of your hand to press it down and seal, then fold the other side and repeat the sealing process. Finally fold in half lengthways into a long sausage shape, sealing the long edge. This gives it extra strength. Cut the log of dough into equal pieces, folding and sealing in the same technique as before. Turn the ball over and roll it in the palm of your hand, smoothing and easing the edges underneath.

Place on baking tray to prove for 45 minutes then transfer to the baking stone in the pre-heated oven. Mist the inside of the oven with a water spray just before closing the door. Turn down the heat to 230c and bake for 10-12 minutes until dark golden brown. Cool on a wire rack.

