

Learn to cook cheap & easy dishes

Words by Sue Smith



“WE EAT with our eyes,” Uma Wylde tells a group of young bemused university students on a crash course to learn how to make cheap and easy dishes

“If it doesn’t look attractive you won’t want to put it in your mouth.

“And don’t just blindly follow the rules and the measurements. Taste, taste, taste, you are the ones that are going to eat it after all.”

The Cotswolds Queen of Posh Nosh who is also a cookery columnist for this magazine specializes in top of the range dishes at bottom of the range prices.

Her student courses are geared to showing youngsters that home cooking can be quick, cheap and delicious.

This is one-pot-cooking which saves on the washing up and appeals to students with more pressing demands on their time than slaving over a sink or hot stove.

Uma’s son Guy did a ski season cooking in a chalet a few years ago and after securing the job and booking his flight he asked her if she could give him a speedy basic course in cooking to get him through the next six months.

“I taught him how to make quick, tasty meals without any fuss just using everyday supermarket ingredients and he came back with glowing reports from clients,” says Uma.

Even the most determined social animal will tire of kebabs and takeaways at some point and Uma has devised the sort of menus that can be whipped up while the credits for Hollyoaks and Neighbours are rolling.

Soups are comforting and nutritious and often the staple diet of students and

Uma was showing this group that they didn’t have to stock up on tins.

Perched on stools along a black granite worktop in Uma’s large and airy kitchen, in Tetbury four students eagerly awaited instruction.

There were four soups on the menu. She started with Mississippi Mud Soup made with Puy lentils, cummin and chillies.

“Always start with a boiling kettle,” says Uma, “It saves so much time.

And for any parents packing their offspring off to university next year forget the ironing board and the iron, they will never see the light of day.

The most useful thing to equip them with is a kitchen timer, measuring spoons, a grater, measuring jug and a mini whisk.

While the Mississippi ingredients simmered away Uma chopped up some leeks and potatoes and showed the students a neat trick for cleaning leeks.

After seven minutes, a dollop of butter, chicken stock and white pepper and the Leek and Potato Soup was ready to blend.

Tomato Soup was a simple concoction of chopped tomatoes, garlic, smoked paprika and a carton of passata topped with a swirl of mixed garlic, basil, olive oil and salt.

“This is the one to do to impress if you have friends coming over,” says Uma.

But it was the Shrimp Soup that had the students gasping in appreciation..

Garlic, crab paste, Martini and frozen prawns resulted in a soup that would give any restaurant a run for its money.

Three chicken dishes followed, Ghurka,

Romana and Piquant and a braised sausage dish with potato wedges is another favourite on the course.

“All these dishes come in at around £1 a head,” says Uma, “They are perfect for students. There is no way they could eat as well for less and for such a small amount of effort.”

Within a couple of hours half a dozen dishes were passed around for tasting. The students had helped with chopping vegetables and herbs and had taken turns to wear and giggle at the “onion goggles” swim goggles which Uma swears by to stop eyes streaming when chopping onions.

All the students eagerly asked questions, passed around the dishes making comments and generally oohed and aaahed over all the tastes.

It was a fun day where time flew by and tasty, appetizing dishes appeared effortlessly,

This is a great course for young people trying to fend for themselves away from home. Not only does it save money but it ensures they will eat good, nutritious food.

Uma’s student cooking courses are specifically designed for young people on a tight budget. The recipes concentrate mainly on one-pot cooking and are low in fat and sugar. Classes are held in Tetbury on the first Saturday of the month from 11.30am-2.30pm and cost £65 per person. *For more details contact Uma on 01666 502727 or email uma@umawylde.com or go to www.umawylde.com*

Verdict from a student

I am not mad about cooking because I always seem to have other things to do but I love eating and I love good food - I don’t like eating rubbish.

I am a great fan of soups so this course was ideal for me. I didn’t realize how easy it was to make soup and the end result was a thousand times better than anything you can get out of a tin.

The best thing about it was that all the ingredients were everything we would normally have in our student house anyway.

Usually we would open the cupboard, see all those things and think there was nothing to eat but this has really shown me how easy it is to make a nice meal out of basics..

And the chicken dishes were amazing. We buy a lot of chicken in our house but it gets a bit boring and we never really know how to make it more interesting.

All these dishes were delicious. I could easily live very happily on all the recipes I learned on this course.

Grace Smith, 20, third year student at Nottingham Trent University