

# Tried & Tasted

COOKERY COURSES RESTAURANTS DELIS BOOKS HOTELS

## Cookery School West End



Cookery School on London's Little Portland Street knows how to make a good impression. On being buzzed inside, we follow our noses downstairs to where our instructor for the All Day Spanish class, Carolina, is sprinkling a bowl of still-sizzling churros with cinnamon and sugar. Before we are allowed near them, we are handed cups of hot chocolate so decadently thick it coats the inside of our mouths. It's an ideal start to the day – until, with a tone of mock drill-sergeant sternness, Carolina orders us to pick up our personalised aprons and report back.

Thanks to the ambition of the day's menu, which includes, but is by no means limited to, a chicken and prawn paella, chorizo and butter bean stew, fried Padrón peppers, a classic tortilla and *torta di Santiago* with sherry and raisin ice cream, it would take a military-like operation to get it all done in time. Luckily, that's what they've got here. Spotless workstations, attentive and professional staff and a cleverly designed itinerary keep the school running like clockwork.

Stocking the larders only with organic eggs, poultry, meat and wine, and sourcing the rest as locally as possible, ensures the

ingredients used are of the highest quality. I can certainly vouch for the freshness of the prawns, as one half of my paella unit is dispatched to de-vein them, while the other half browns a round of chicken thighs, and those in charge of the tortilla weep their way through a stack of onions. Tears wiped away and all the prep completed, we are rewarded with the firework display of a pan full of bright green Padrón peppers – fried on a high heat in a splash of olive oil before being sprinkled in salt and devoured in a flash. 'While nine in ten are mild-mannered,' Carolina warns, 'any one could blow your head off.' Thankfully, we all come through unscathed. The second half of the session sees us put our prep into practice. We bring the butter bean and chorizo stew to the boil with a glug of wine, flip our tortillas to fry evenly on both sides and slide our ice cream into the blast-chiller to set. The torta is fished from the oven and skewer-tested, while the saffron-infused paella is left to soften. Somehow while all this is happening, a dining table, replete with wine and freshly baked bread, has been set-up and laid behind us. Well-drilled indeed. AA. £150, [cookeryschool.co.uk](http://cookeryschool.co.uk)

Reviews by Alex Allen; Justyna Majewska. Photos (top) by lauraforrester.com

## Deli of the month...

### MR CHRISTIAN'S Notting Hill



Something of a local institution, this deli has long been on the lips of Notting Hill's residents – and for good reason. Its abundance of homely produce – from artisan cheeses to quiches and charcuterie – will certainly liven up your lunches. The team here gets to work early each day, stacking the shelves with freshly baked breads (a selection from over 50 styles), tossing salads such as artichoke, broad bean and sundried tomato, and making mains like sweet chilli chicken to take home. Cured hams hanging from the ceiling, jars of larder-busting chutneys, oils and vinegars will furnish you with that

extra special ingredient that you won't find easily anywhere else. Then there's the fresh sandwiches and pastries...

When it comes to cheese, Mr Christian's is a definite cut above. The range is sourced from artisan producers, matured by an affineur in Holland Park, and only sold when at their best. Opened in 1974 by Tim Dawson and Glynn Christian, today the deli is part of the Jeroboams group and a top-notch wine store has opened up next door. Better than rummaging for bargains at Portobello Market, you're virtually guaranteed to find something that takes your fancy here. JM. [mrchristians.co.uk](http://mrchristians.co.uk)

