

Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Cooking!

Rosalind Rathouse, Founder of Cookery School at Little Portland Street, London's most sustainable cookery school, gives her thoughts on children and cooking and introduces a new National Cooking Programme.



For some years I had been working on an initiative to teach the kids in our nation how to cook because as a teacher and, more latterly, as the founder of Cookery School at Little Portland Street, I feel strongly that a few generations have, sadly, missed out on the essential skills and utter joy associated with learning to cook. As a result, they have been unable to pass even the most basic of culinary skills on to their kids or their kids' kids!

For me, cooking is almost as essential as learning to read and write. It provides the key to the future health

of our nation and is a great contributor to helping reduce our joint carbon footprint. My cookery plan was intended to be a fulfilling retirement one but with the pandemic having hit, and with retirement no longer on the cards, it seemed more than timely to bring this project to fruition during a time of national hardship.

With most of our children having missed out on full time schooling for the better part of a year, it would be gratifying if they could remember 2021 as the time that they learnt to become proficient cooks

rather than recalling a year of misery caused by a multitude of different circumstances.

Over the past year the programme has been refined and, rather than starting with basics, it made more sense to throw our kids in at the deep and teach them how to make dishes that they enjoy and are accustomed to eating. A 'mark two series' which address the wonderful diversity in our eating habits where we will focus on cooking dishes from around the globe, can follow if mark one is successful.



Culinary education in the UK has been so hidebound and boring, having little to do with enjoyment of cooking for its own sake. Nor has it shared the important message that acquiring culinary skills is not difficult. This is what we are setting out to do in our 20 one hour FREE weekly sessions.

With that in mind, our daring and weighty programme had to have a name to reflect what it was setting out to do and so, the National Cooking Programme was born at the start of 2021. At Cookery School we have gained loads of experience in offering online classes and realise that the National Cooking Programme has to be live and interactive. Digital demonstrations only work for the most motivated of

individuals. We have run very large online classes and the food that has been produced has been really good. We know that we have a winning formula.

We also realise that we need to attract partners offering endorsements and sponsorships as well as publicity and social media help. Most importantly we want to ensure that those in food poverty are included in our programme and do not miss out yet again. To this end we need the assistance of charities and supermarkets as well as government. Those in any way associated with kids and food acknowledge that culinary education has an essential role to play in the future. Paying lip service and dragging feet in putting together a simple but realistic programme has meant

that this much essential education has been put on the back burner for far too long. One thing that the pandemic has taught us is that as a nation we are resilient and very able to find solutions to unexpected challenges spontaneously and speedily. We believe that with the National Cooking Programme we will, at last, be addressing a very long overdue need.

We would really appreciate the help of anyone who feels that they can contribute to this initiative and, more particularly, those organisations that can help in any way with kids that have all too often found themselves being marginalised.



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