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A recipe for quick, easy and healthy



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Cooking healthy meals for all the family to enjoy can be time-consuming and exper

But one cooking class specialises in making quick, cheap and, more importantly, easy meals that ever

The Tastes Great cooking class is run by The EC Roberts Centre, in Crasswell Street, Portsmouth.

Once a week, lecturers from Highbury and restaurant chefs go to the centre and help the participants |

With a fully-functioning kitchen, the parents have a chance to learn new meals which can then be repe

Funded by Comic Relief, the classes encourage parents to try new ingredients and flavours.

'We recognise that some of the families who use the centre don't have a lot of experience when it comes to cooking. I'm the services manager at the centre.

'They want to improve their skills and get a better understanding of nutrition.

'Easily accessible food can be expensive, lacking in basic nutrients and high in sugar, fat, salt and calories.

'Tastes Great aims to teach life-long skills that enable families to use a greater diversity of ingredients.

The lessons cover sweet foods to savouries and snacks to main meals.

A few of the favourites with the parents who attend are the shepherd's pie and lemon cheesecake.

Lisa Ablett, from Fratton, has attended many of the cooking classes and thinks they are a great addition to the centre.

The mum-of-three says: 'I was involved in The EC Roberts Centre before the cooking classes started.

'It is through them that I heard about the class.

'I love it and I like that I can come back, learning more recipes and new flavours.

'I used to be okay with cooking but I had lost all my confidence.

'Even cooking sausages and fish fingers would cause me to panic because I didn't think they were doable.

'I was constantly checking and it just took all the fun out of it.'

For Lisa, finding food her children like is a must and the class brings more range into their diet.

She adds: 'The new ingredients and recipes I learn in the class, I try at home too.

'That is one of the best things about Tastes Great, they are easy enough that you don't need constant supervision.

'All the ingredients can be found in a normal supermarket at cheap prices.'

Similar to Lisa, Katie Weiss-Frowde has three children.

She is also a regular of the cooking class and loves the different recipes she can now include in her cooking.

Katie adds: 'I love cooking but I am not that confident when it comes to new things just in case I do it wrong.

'But here, all the recipes are easy to follow and they don't take any fancy equipment or technique.'

The recipes are picked by the mentors who come into the class.

They alternate from lecturers from the hospitality and catering course at Highbury College and chefs from the area.

Aaron Haydon, from Loch Fyne in Gunwharf Quays, picked haddock paté for one of the sessions they have run.

With only a handful of ingredients needed and preparation time of only 15 minutes, the meal was a favourite.

'We like to pick easy, simple meals which are good for families to make.

'It is about doing something that is easy and uses equipment that anyone has at home.

'The haddock paté in particular is cheap because it only has fish, shallots, horse radish, mayonnaise a

'All these things can be bought at supermarkets and they can be adapted.

'That is another thing with the meals we pick; they can all be changed to meet an individual's favourite

'They can swap the fish or meats for other ones or, if the dish has vegetables, they can add more of th

'They are all quite versatile.'

The project started last year when the group was given funding by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Co

The centre ran a few lessons and the popularity of the group grew so they decided to restart it.

Originally, the class saw a lot of parents but now people who just want to improve their cooking for the

Angela Hutcheon lived in Spain before returning to England and she has been to two of the classes.

She says: 'We first got involved in the centre because when we returned from Spain we were homeles

'The more time we spent here, the more things we learnt about the centre and the Tastes Great cooki

'I have loved coming because it has really helped with making new friends as well as learning new rec

'For my husband and I, it is also an opportunity to spend some time together doing something we both

Angela has tried new recipes which she never thought to try.

She adds: 'In my second session, we made orzo which is a rice dish which I never though I'd be able t

'But it is so simple and it takes a professional to show you just how easy things can be made when yo

The EC Roberts Centre is a child-focused charity which offers a range of services for families in need

They have a nursery within the centre along with many projects, like the cooking class, to help parents

They look after homeless families or those dealing with relationship problems.

To join in with the Tastes Great cooking class or for more information on the centre visit robertscentre, call (023) 9229 6919

LEMON CHEESECAKE

Ingredients (serves 8)

80g digestive biscuits

50g melted butter

200g light soft cheese

500g Quark (fat-free soft cheese)

200g icing sugar

Zest of two lemons

Juice of three lemons

Four gelatine sheets

Method

1. Crush the digestive biscuits and mix with the melted butter.
2. Press into the base of a 20cm springform tin. 3. Chill till firm.
4. Whisk the light soft cheese with the quark and icing sugar, then fold through zest two lemons.
5. Soak the gelatine sheets in cold water and melt in the juice of three lemons over a low heat.
6. Beat into the cheese mix, then spoon on top of the biscuit base.
7. Chill until set.

APPLE CRUMBLE

Ingredients (serves 4 to 6)

450g (about 4 large) cooking apples

75g butter or baking margarine in cubes

150g wholemeal flour

5 tablespoons water

1 dessert spoon of dried ground cinnamon

10g Demerara sugar

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180C / Gas mark 4
2. Place the flour in a large mixing bowl and add the butter/margarine. Rub the butter/margarine into the flour.
3. Peel the apples and chop into small chunks (about 2cm) and place into a small/medium oven dish. . then place the crumble mixture on top and smooth over.
4. Sprinkle the sugar evenly onto the top.
5. Bake in the oven until the crumble is browned and the fruit is bubbling and has softened (about 40 r
6. Serve with fat free yoghurt or low- fat custard.

COTTAGE PIE

Ingredients (serves 4)

400g lean beef

500g potatoes

1 onion

2 carrots

50g of sweetcorn

50g of frozen peas

1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs

4 tsps of low salt gravy granules

Method

1. Peel the potatoes and chop into chunks. Peel the carrots and chop in small chunks.
2. Cook the potatoes in a large saucepan of boiling water until tender.
3. Add the mince to a large saucepan and fry over a high heat until browned. Stir in the carrot, peas, o
4. Add 300ml of water and bring to the boil then simmer for 20 minutes.
5. Drain potatoes and mash.
6. Add the sweet corn to the mince mixture then sprinkle in the gravy granules. Stir until thickened.
7. Tip the mince mixture into a baking dish and make sure it is evenly spread. Top with the mashed po
8. Place under a grill and grill until the top is browned.



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