

living north

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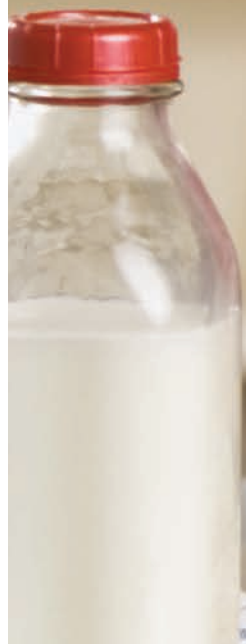
8 places to make
the most of
summer

*Gillian
Anderson*
*“London is where
I prefer to be”*

**BOXING
YOGA?**
Trying out the
new fitness fad

Little chefs

Behind the
scenes at
The Kids'
Kitchen



Tom Parker Bowles... picks his five a day | Henry Conway... goes all Scandinavian on us | Maria Beaumont... keeps it in the family



Early dinner

North London-based The Kids' Kitchen is causing a real stir in the culinary world. Mark Keble meets founder Nicole Freeman and checks out what's on the menu

For all the talk of obesity problems amongst our young, it's often overlooked that there are many out there trying to rectify the problem. It all started with the good work of Jamie Oliver that has led to many a school improving their dinner offerings, and locals like North Londoner Nicole Freeman is taking on the baton and turning the heat up a notch.

For just over two years Nicole has been providing holiday cookery classes for children in the area. "I've always loved cooking and, after having children, became more aware of how many kids were becoming fussy eaters, eating a lot of pre-prepared 'fast' food and couldn't recognise everyday ingredients," Nicole says to a nodding interviewer (I went through a phase of only wanting macaroni cheese as a child). "My son was a very fussy eater when he was little and I found that cooking with him and playing 'games' with his food was a great way of encouraging him to try more things. When he started school I thought it was finally time to put into practice some of the ideas I'd had about cooking classes and see what the reaction was like from parents and their children."

The reaction was excellent, leading to Nicole offering the holiday classes from summer 2010, before expanding to include Sunday morning cooking sessions as well as term-time classes for pre-schoolers. Recently The Kids' Kitchen won the Netmums award for Barnet's Best Pre-School Class.

That's the response from the adults, but what about the children themselves? "They are always really positive and keen to get stuck in," Nicole grins. "Whether they are chopping, stirring or grating it never ceases to amaze me how much even little children can do when you give them the chance."

Nicole laments the fact that the opportunities for children to learn

to cook are limited – "Cooking skills used to be passed down through the generations from watching parents/grandparents cook, and that doesn't seem to be the case any more" – but initiatives like The Kids' Kitchen certainly have lasting benefits. "Starting kids cooking at a young age is a great way of teaching them about healthy eating and helping them broaden their palate before they become fussy eaters," Nicole explains. "My aim is for kids to have fun in the classes: I believe that enjoying their time in the kitchen lays the foundation for a love of cooking and a curiosity about food and where it comes from."

You can see to the right what happens in a typical class, but perhaps atypical to The Kids' Kitchen are the adult workshops Nicole offers too. "Adult workshops are lots of fun and I generally tailor them around what the group would like to focus on," she says. "We generally kick off with tea and coffee and some homemade cakes while I demonstrate all the dishes, though there is plenty of opportunity to get hands-on for those that want to." Oh, and there is one major difference between the classes for the little ones and the grown-ups. "Everyone gets to enjoy tasting all the dishes with a glass of wine!"

So The Kids' Kitchen is nicely simmering away, but Nicole's ambitions seemingly hold no bounds. "I've got lots of ideas and just need to find the time between classes to implement them!" she laughs. "Customers keep asking when I'm going to publish a cookbook and that's something I'd really love to do. I'd also love to do a TV show so that I can reach out to more kids and their parents, and show how easy and beneficial cooking can be." It's more sky's the limit for The Kids' Kitchen than pie in the sky. }

thekidskitchen.net
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Class laws

Inside The Kids' Kitchen

"Our preschool classes have a maximum of ten children aged 2-5 and their parents/carers.

The session is split into an introduction (where we talk about that week's ingredient and get the kids warmed up with our Kids' Kitchen song), then cooking time, and finally a story or game to round things off before the kids can taste what they've made and take a little home. The children also take home a recipe sheet and a special certificate for trying that week's new ingredient. Classes for older children aged 5+ last for three hours and are generally based around a theme: for example, we are running some Olympic and football themed sessions over the summer holidays, and will run some spooky Halloween classes during October half-term. The classes have a maximum of eight children and they cook everything from scratch, finishing the session with lunch or an early supper where they get to taste what they've made. We also leave some goodies to take home for mum and dad to try, along with the recipe booklet and a certificate for all the new foods they have tried as I try to encourage them to experiment with new food and new tastes."