



SPICE



OF Life



The fashion for top-notch food continues apace, so **CAROLINE PHILLIPS** learns her goosegrass from her ganache with the help of some culinary superstars on the UK's best cookery courses





Daylesford

WILD FOOD: FORAGING AND COOKING COURSE

Want to bring out your inner caveman? Then go foraging for your lunch with environmental scientist, Tim Field. His motto? 'You're never far from an edible, free treat.' You wander through fields (spot the rare breed cattle) and into woods filtering light through hazel trees. You'll look for nuts, seeds and fruits – haw, sloe and rowan – and leaves, from dandelion to shepherd's purse, depending on the season. 'Sorrel and nettle are best in springtime,' you scribble. 'Cow parsley looks like (lethal) hemlock.' Back at the beautiful garden kitchen, you deposit your chickweed, goosegrass and nettles. There's a roe deer hanging from the ceiling and a pigeon lying on the worktop, waiting to be skinned and plucked – by you. Wild Food. It's one of the best courses on offer, but not for the squeamish. Tutors don't come better than Steve Brown (ex Savoy and Rules) – he's passionate, dynamic and knowledgeable. He teaches dishes like pearl barley, nettle and wild garlic risotto; wild rabbit pappardelle, 'pest pasta', he dubs it; and raw pigeon with pear, juniper and sorrel. This course shows what it's like to really connect with your food.

£175, from 9.30am–4pm. daylesford.com/bookings



Culinary Anthropologist

COOKING CLUB

Anna Colquhoun, the anthropologist and enthusiastic author of *Eat Slow Britain*, runs monthly Cooking Clubs for five to ten people in the kitchen of her Highbury home, midst tagines and African pots picked up on culinary research travels. Her classes are so unpublicised, excellent and such good value that it pains me to tell you about them for fear they'll get too booked up. There are Moroccan cookery sessions to Nordic baking, and everything in between. The preserving class is great: think quince, cheese, beetroot and ginger chutneys, and a kitchen suffused with the smell of allspice. Anna always uses tip-top organic ingredients. She's also a self-confessed 'food nerd' – more like the nicest head girl – who gives enthusiastic demos but also delivers fascinating details on the cultural, historical and social context of food. Classes finish with a chatty meal around her refectory table scoffing what you've made. Surely the country's best home kitchen?

£45 per person, per class or £120 for three. 7–10pm. culinaryanthropologist.org

The Raymond Blanc Cookery School

ADULT & CHILD

Any RB course is wonderful to the nth degree. His cookery school is in a Smallbone kitchen behind the 15th-century Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, and courses range from Shellfish to Blanc Vite (fast food RB-style). The adult and child course is great for entire families, involving ten participants – aged from seven. You're kitted out in chef's jacket to create a basic granary bread and simple fish pie ('don't overcook the fish, folks'), and Frasier (that's strawberry cake with a mousseline. 'Difficulty rating: two out of three'). It's all taught in child-friendly lingo. There's a TV screen to give a bird's eye view, and the atmosphere's jolly. Produce is all bio, organic and the delicious veggies (90 of them) and herbs (70 types) come from the Manoir's walled garden. Every last detail is obsessively perfect – from ethical sourcing to sensor-operated sinks. Plus, you get hot choc, your own homemade pistou pasta lunch, and tea. Best have a sleepover the night before – you'll enjoy old-fashioned luxury.

£555 per adult and child, 8.45–4.45pm. manoir.com



BEST OF THE REST

1 Waitrose Cookery School

GLUTEN-FREE COOKERY

Author of *The Gluten-Free Cookbook for Kids*, Adriana Rabinovich runs fantastic Gluten-Free Workshops. She's Leiths trained and super dedicated (inspired by her daughter who has coeliac disease). Catch her at the Waitrose Cookery School in its state-of-the-art kitchen to learn tips and techniques for making bread that isn't like a brick and Dove's Farm gluten-free pizza bases. £105. glutenfree4kids.com



2 Chewton Glen

SEA FORAGING

Samphire, sea spinach or want to harvest mussels yourself? The new rage is for sea foraging and the best place to do it is at Chewton Glen (where you can stay in a treehouse overnight). Go with pots, kitchen knives, cheery spirits and head chef Luke Matthews. He will help you identify sea beet – aka sea spinach – and prise clams off the rocks. There are shore crabs, too, and limpets and winkles. Rich culinary pickings indeed and you return to the kitchen for a hands-on demo with Luke cooking up your sea foraged feast.

£627 based on two guests sharing a Garden Room, and that includes breakfast, a half-day sea foraging with Chef, use of spa and leisure facilities. chewtonglen.com



3 Lime Wood

MUSHROOMING

Now you're in touch with your inner hunter-gatherer, pop over to the other side of the New Forest to stride out from Lime Wood for a spot of mushroom foraging with The Wild Cook, Garry Eveleigh. Enthusiastic about finding fresh food for free among the wild ponies, he gives tips on safe foraging – choosing cepes (yum) over lookalike young panther caps (kidney failure). Luckily he's been at it for four decades. Afterwards you get to savour your findings – cooked up in a delicious lunch in the kitchen at Lime Wood. £100 for three hours. limewood.co.uk

4 Billingsgate Seafood School

CATCH OF THE DAY

Catch of the Day starts with a Billingsgate Fish Market visit at 6.15am – getting up close and personal with 150 global fish. You're taught to identify breeds and assess their quality – all before a breakfast of kedgeree or perhaps kippers. Then it's straight to work on seven (round and flat) fish species – learning how to decapitate, gut, skin, scale, fillet, pin-bone or prepare and serve whole. This is all followed by demos of several cooking techniques and simple pairings that you get to guzzle for lunch. £198, 6.15am to 2.15pm. seafoodtraining.org

5 Sozai Cooking School

TASTY VEGETARIAN CLASS

Based in the City – it's a café at lunchtime – this is where Japanese cookery is made easy peasy Japanese. The ebullient tutor Yuki Gomi teaches home-style cooking and works on dishes concurrently. It's veggie nirvana – you learn to make gyoza (like ravioli) and dipping sauces, hijiki (sea veg) with rice and tofu steak, using kombu (kelp) stock. Yuki is a mine of information on Japanese ingredients, where to source them locally, and healthy cooking. £75, 120 minutes. sozai.co.uk

