



COOKING STREET STYLE

Street food is a world of sweet marinades, tangy pastes, powders of dazzling colours and wonderfully textured greens, where the pestle and mortar are your best friends, and your chopping skills must be top notch. Different from European cooking in many ways, it involves a lot of prepping, chopping (lengthways and at a slant, mostly), very little actual cooking and a lot of styling at the end. The culinary concept is uniquely appealing because it is more social than other gastronomic experiences – you can cook street food with your family and friends easily, as there are jobs for everyone.

I love eating in the street all over the world, and really looked forward to going to my first class at Lynda Booth's **DUBLIN COOKERY SCHOOL**, which offers a wide variety of short classes and longer certificate courses at their Blackrock location. The World Street Food course, a mixture of alternating South East Asian, Latin American and Middle Eastern dishes, can be taken as an evening class or as a one-day weekend course. The session involves a good mix of hands-on cooking and relaxed sitting and watching the cookery demos while sipping lemonade. The course begins in the demonstration kitchen, where we were able to keep a close eye on the dishes as they were being prepared. The demos were quick and entertaining, run with enthusiasm and skill, and full of useful advice. I got some great tips on how to prepare and organise my ingredients during cooking (there can be many in street food), where to source exotic ingredients in Dublin, and finally found out how to properly cook rice noodles (you don't, actually). After absorbing all that, we began cooking in pairs. The staff were attentive, shouting encouragements and making sure our stations remained orderly and clean.

The menu on the day was a collection of easy and fun-to-make classics that also look very, very pretty on a plate: Vietnamese banh xeo pancakes, chicken kebabs with mint chutney, pad Thai noodles, and baba ghanoush and butterbean hummus with pitta breads. The menu is simple, made up of light and fragrant dishes, most of which you can enjoy eating with your fingers. If you love condiments and spices, it can be a pretty magical experience: the baba ghanoush was one of the most flavoursome I've ever had, and was served with pomegranate seeds. It was also the favourite dish of the students I shared a table and a bottle of wine with in the dining room while sampling our day's efforts after the course. **Diana Nacu**

World Street Food evening or one-day weekend course, €70-€150, 01 210 0555, dublincookeryschool.ie.

ENTERTAINING MADE EASY

Dinner parties have never been so in vogue and, while some make hosting look like a breeze, many of us mere mortals are sadly destined for a *Come Dine With Me*-worthy disaster when it comes to cooking for others.

Happily, chef and TV personality **NEVEN MAGUIRE** is tackling home entertaining head on in his newly opened cookery school, located next door to his family's award-winning restaurant, MacNean House, in the idyllic countryside setting of Blacklion, Co Cavan.

On the Entertaining Made Easy course, he takes participants step by step through creating an impressive, yet surprisingly simple three-course meal (think goat's cheese tarts to start, followed by pan-fried duck for main and a lemon posset to finish) while also demonstrating how to make delicious accompaniments, such as basil pesto and chilli jam, before helping you cook everything yourself.

There's a limited number of 14 students on each course so everyone gets the full benefit of hands-on help from Neven and his staff. All cooking is done in pairs, so this course is perfect for a girly get-together or even for a day out with a difference for foodie couples.

We enjoyed a wine and cheese tasting after finishing our meal and left the school full-bellied, laden with doggie bags (plus adorable complimentary Mason jars for our pesto and jam) – and even a goodie bag filled with some of Neven's favourite ingredients.

If dinner parties aren't your thing, the school runs a wide range of courses, varying from Asian cuisine to a Christmas cooking masterclass. **Sharon McGowan**

MacNean House, Blacklion, Co Cavan. Half day €130; full day €265, 071 985 3022; macneanrestaurant.com.

