

# STAR TALK

With  
Jill  
Robinson

## 'I want to inspire'



**C**OOKERY programmes may consume our TV screens, but according to Emma Crowhurst, it doesn't mean that more people are actually getting into their kitchens.

Emma, a chef who has worked both on and off the TV cameras, is on a one-woman mission to change that, by offering inspiration and cooking tips at private cooking sessions at Fermyn Woods Hall.

Emma, who lives in Suffolk with her family, travels to Fermyn Woods Hall near Brigstock once a month to teach different classes such as Cosy Curries and Casseroles, Easy Entertaining and Bread Making and Patisserie.

She said: "Some people come in physically scared, expecting this Gordon Ramsey-type figure but I'm nothing like that."

"I just want to help people grow in confidence, build on their skills, and be inspired to get back into the kitchen."

The kitchen is Emma's home, having known she wanted to be a chef from the age of 12.

After going to catering college, she worked in a number of restaurants and then went on to become headteacher at Leith's School of Food and Wine.

Emma said: "We have all levels of cooks coming to the class and that suits me because as well as being the head at Leith's, I also have two children who I cook with and I've taught a City and Guild's course to teenagers in Ipswich so I'm happy working with all levels."

"I think I know how to pitch things to people and I give more help to those who need it while offering tips to inspire others who have more skills."

A typical day for Emma at Fermyn Woods involves preparing a lunch for the guests, and helping them make basic staples, such as bread.

She said: "We start with bread and they can add whatever they want, so some people add cheese or sundried tomatoes while others add walnuts and make it a sweeter bread, it's a chance to experiment."

"But that's what cooking's about, it's not hard, you just have to know a little bit of science about why things happen and of course, organisation."

"I'm very cavalier in my teaching and I actually encourage them to muck

things up because then I can advise them on how to fix it and stop any panic that could arise if it happened in their own home."

"That's why the course is great, as you'd never get that on a cookery programme, they wouldn't dare show a mistake, they are perfection, and that's not real life."

Emma should know, as over the years, she has appeared on the popular cookery programme, Ready, Steady, Cook as well as being an expert on the Generation Game and being part of the Food and Drink Programme for four years.

She said: "I did love doing the TV work but it wasn't the same as being in the kitchen working with people face to face."

"I worked with Bruce Forsyth twice, who was lovely and the consummate professional, and I also worked with Jim Davidson once and gave him a run for his money, which he loved."

"I have never found cooking stressful, but on TV it really was."

"On the Generation Game, I had to make sponge sugar which is pretty tricky anyway, but I had to get it right, under the studio lights, and the camera

had to be ready at the same time."

"I did Ready, Steady, Cook about three times and it was really nerve racking."

"I just wish I had had my two girls because then I would have been able to put in perspective what stress really is."

"But when you are up against someone like Antony Worrall Thompson who has been part of it since the start, it's very hard."

"It's not just about being a cook any more, it's about being a cook in that environment."

The environment is totally different at Fermyn Woods Hall.

She said: "I have a maximum of 12 people for a day and the barriers soon come down as they chat and laugh as they work."

"I think it's important for them to get hands on, so although I do demonstrations, I don't think that's the way to learn, from watching someone else."

"I encourage them to work on their presentation skills as well as the cooking and I just like to make sure they leave with as much knowledge of the different aspects of food as possible."

"I can see people's confidence visibly grow and it's a brilliant feeling for me to give them that sense of achievement."

"I have always felt very lucky to have a job that I totally love and to be able to share that love with people is just brilliant."

■ For more information about Emma's cookery courses at Fermyn Woods Hall, you can visit their website at [www.fermywoodshall.co.uk](http://www.fermywoodshall.co.uk), email [info@fermywoodshall.co.uk](mailto:info@fermywoodshall.co.uk) or call 01536 373886.



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