



Mums, teach your sons to cook

If we want men to cook at home, let's start with the boys, says **Emma Freud** (mum of three sons)

When my children were tiny, I dreamed of us baking together. There we would be in the sun-drenched kitchen, the little ones standing on chairs to reach the counter, wearing adorable aprons with icing sugar dabbed on their shining faces, laughing as one of their endearingly messy fairy cakes toppled in slow motion onto the floor, where our naughty puppies would lap it up.

The reality turned out to be different: I got grumpy as my incompetent toddlers destroyed my well-researched recipes with their inadequate motor skills, dropping most of the contents of each bowl onto the floor, where they remained because, I forgot, we didn't have puppies. I did a lot of shouting, and was then astonished when my kids refused to help with the cooking for the rest of their childhoods.

It was consequently a surprise when my eldest son asked if I would teach him to cook during his gap year. He wanted to make friends in his student dorm and this was enough of a motive for him to brave my culinary bossiness.

I morphed into nasty Mary Berry

So for a couple of months last year, we cooked lunch or dinner together every day for the family. He chose the recipes from his list of favourite takeaways, and I morphed into nasty Mary Berry, criticising his knife skills, and trying to teach him how to do three things at once. 'Why are we in such a hurry?' he asked. 'This is just how I cook.' 'It's like learning to bake with Stalin.' 'Shut up and keep peeling. And while you're at it, call me Chef.' 'Yes, Mum.' By the end of the term, he had done everything from chilli to cheesecake, lasagne to falafel, houmous to halloumi fries, and we declared him a graduate of 'Mussolini's Cooking School'.

Eight months later, the student and I arrive at university. We buy a saucepan, a frying pan, two bowls and some basic utensils – then panic that 16 other parents will have done the same thing and the students won't be able to enter the teeny kitchen because it's overrun with Pyrex. We are wrong: nobody else brought anything because none of the other boys cook.

So here's the thing: in Britain, one man in 10 describes themselves as a complete novice in the kitchen; for women it's less than one in 20. Only 8% of households share the cooking equally*. We just aren't teaching enough boys to cook – and it has a wide cultural impact. Men eat more takeaways than women. Takeaway sales have risen by 28% in the past 10 years which does us no favours physically, culturally or emotionally. We are making many strides with feminism, but until men feel comfortable in the kitchen, women will feel pushed towards the domestic for the sake of the family, whether they like it or not.

He's turned his room-mate into his sous chef

Before I left my boy at uni, I collected the recipes we'd cooked together, printed them out and put them in a ring binder. To some extent, it's worked – he's ended up cooking a meal every Thursday night for the students on his floor. Everyone chips in with the costs, he's turned his room-mate into his sous chef, and I get on average 10 calls per meal, which I adore: 'When you say marinate the meat for a couple of hours, will seven minutes do?' Success has been intermittent – we no longer mention The Macaroni Cheese Debacle (#claggy), but last week's pulled pork was a triumph.

Unexpectedly, my son is passing on his semi-skills – the room-mate who arrived at uni unable to boil pasta made guacamole on his own last week. And, in breaking news: a girl on the floor above has said she'd like to contribute by making pudding every Thursday. I'm buying a hat in anticipation of their union. And I will wear a big T-shirt on that day saying 'Feminists teach their sons to cook'.

Good Food contributing editor Emma Freud is a journalist and broadcaster, and director of *Red Nose Day*, which is on BBC One on 24 March.

  @emmafreud



'Skye Gyngell taught me to cook in my thirties. My mum taught me when I was little, but her ethic was about making the best out of nothing. Skye is all about finding fresh, seasonal ingredients.'

Portrait DAVID COTSWORTH | Recipe photograph STUART OVENDEN | Food styling PIP SPENCE | Styling JENNY IGGLEDEN
*Stats from the Good Food Nation Survey 2016, for more information, visit bbcgoodfood.com/article/gf-nation-report



Pulled pork

My son finds reading recipes tricky (I have the same problem with spreadsheets) so I tried to write this in a way he could read easily... no weighing, no difficult processes, but a phenomenal meal at the end.

SERVES 12 people for under £15

PREP 15 mins **COOK** 4-8 hrs **EASY**

✳ once cooked and pulled

- 1 Buy a large **boneless shoulder of pork (2.5kg or so)**. Mix together **2 tsp each smoked paprika, ground cumin, pepper, and brown sugar** plus **1 tsp salt**. Rub the mixture all over the pork.
- 2 Put the pork in a big casserole dish, skin-side up, and pour in **2 medium mugfuls of cider**. Cover with a lid and cook in the oven at 150C/130C fan/gas 2 for anywhere between 4 and 8 hrs until falling apart. Check every few hours in case it gets dry – if it does, add another mugful of cider.
- 3 Take it out of the oven and put the meat in a big dish, leaving the liquid in the casserole. Cut the skin off the meat, then shred the meat using two forks. Ditch any fatty bits, and skim any excess fat off the surface of the sauce.
- 4 Add a **mugful of a good smoky BBQ sauce** to the casserole, mix it in, then ladle some into a bowl for dipping. Put the pulled pork back in the casserole with the juices so it stays moist. Season to taste. *Can be made one day ahead – just reheat.*
- 5 Serve in **soft white rolls** with some **coleslaw** (recipe below) and the bowl of meaty juices on the side for ‘French dipping’ the sandwich while you’re eating.

PER-SERVING (0) 000 kcals - fat 0g - saturates 0g - carbs 0g - sugars 0g - fibre 0g - protein 0g - salt 0.0g

15-minute coleslaw

SERVES 6 **PREP** 15 mins **NO COOK**

- 1 Finely chop **1/2 white cabbage** as thinly as you can, then chop all the slices roughly so that none of the pieces are more than 2.5cm long. Put them in a bowl.
- 2 Grate **3 carrots** and add to the cabbage, then throw in **1 small bunch mint leaves, picked and roughly chopped**.
- 3 For the dressing, mix **1 tbsp mayonnaise** with **1 tbsp sour cream**, the juice from **1/2 lemon**, and a big pinch of seasoning.
- 4 Add to the bowl with the cabbage, carrots and mint leaves, mix and enjoy.

GOOD-TO-KNOW low fat - low cal - calcium - folate - fibre - vit c
PER-SERVING (0) 000 kcals - fat 0g - saturates 0g - carbs 0g - sugars 0g - fibre 0g - protein 0g - salt 0.0g



Next month:

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