

Cyrenians have a new kitchen – get booked up for some cookery classes

Ian Grimwade is the Head of Business Development and Marketing at Cyrenians, a charity that does so much for the rehabilitation of people affected by homelessness.

Here Ian tells us about the ideas behind the new kitchen in Leith, where they will run classes for everyone – we are told the bread-making classes are already in high demand.

He writes : “We were delighted to have Queen Margaret University Chancellor and catering legend Prue Leith as our special guest at the opening of Cyrenians new, purpose-built Cook School, *Flavour and Haver*, in Jane Street, Leith.

“Throughout her career Prue has shown a deep-rooted commitment to social responsibility, through the charity Focus on Food that she set up and the Food For Life initiative that works in schools focusing on cooking and sustainability.”



During the visit The Edinburgh Reporter spoke with Prue Leith who said : “This new cookery school is to teach people who really need to learn how to cook. I was showing them how to make ratatouille today. It is a very good way of getting children to like vegetables because they don’t naturally like veg. You put it in one pot and cook it up with some olive oil, some balsamic vinegar and lots of salt and pepper and basil on the top. It tastes almost meaty, and it is good for you!

“The Cyrenians run a course here with students from QMU. Most students in their first year put on a lot of weight because they have been living at home and being cooked for by parents.

When they get to university they start eating takeaways and they pile on the weight, so we are trying to make sure that they learn how to cook what is good for them. You have to make it fun though!

“I would love to come back and teach another class here. This is good fun and my students today – these guys were great fun! The Cyrenians do all sorts of good things for homeless people. I think cooking is wonderful as it is not only good for your health to eat fresh food, but it is something you can do in community. Cooking is social glue. Eating together is fun, and it allows people to have conversations across the table.”



Ian Grimwade explains the background of the charity : “Cyrenians started the Fareshare operation in Jane Street in 2000 and the original management team of that nascent food re-distribution operation tell the story of sitting in a van, on a delivery run taking surplus food out to our partner charities, and the volunteer sharing his meal plan for the next few days: Pot-Noodle, Pot-Noodle, Chip Shop. The team also saw that some of the volunteers supporting the depot surplus food re-distribution operations didn’t know the difference between a pepper and a chilli, or even have the most basic cooking skills. So a second hand cooker was acquired from our friends at Bethany. Soup was prepared on a Monday, and the team sat around a table to eat together. Recipes were sent out with trays of food, and volunteers began to take a hand in making the soup.

“The Cyrenians team saw the need to provide structured basic cooking classes, and in 2001 pilot classes started to be run out at partner charities who were receiving Fareshare food deliveries. It became clear that demand was high, both from clients needed to learn how to cook and staff at charities who needed to learn how to teach people to cook.

“Over time more cookers were secured, cabinets built and a training kitchen established. This kitchen, based at the FareShare depot has been the base for cooking classes since those first pilots were run 17 years ago and last year 285 people either attended a cooking class or received accredited food education training.

“In the last 17 years we have supported thousands of people, encouraging them to healthier eating, and showing them how to buy and prepare food on a low budget. Our participants learn about food hygiene and food safety along with growing their confidence in the kitchen whilst sharing the enjoyment of cooking and eating a meal in a positive social setting.

“Of those thousands who have been through the Jane Street doors here is John’s story. John had been engaged with Cyrenians’ services since the beginning of 2017 when he was referred to our 8 week cooking classes. He struggles with loneliness and social isolation alongside significant health problems related to addiction. The initial referral was seen as a proactive means of assisting him in addressing both physical and mental ill health.

“John was an enthusiastic cooking class participant and most weeks would relate how the skills he had learnt the previous week had been put to good use cooking for both himself and others. For him the highlight of his week was coming along to the cooking classes and we were pleased that when the 8 weeks came to end, we were able to offer him a follow on in the form of our weekly lunch club. The lunch club is held weekly for all staff & volunteers from our FareShare and Food Education programmes to sit down together to eat lunch on a Thursday. The meal is cooked by volunteers using food that would have ended up in landfill. John joined this happy band of volunteer cooks as soon as his cookery course came to an end and has been volunteering his skills ever since.

“During the past 6 months he has also volunteered himself as a

participant on our Good Food Health course. This course is a train the trainer type course and the trainees needed participants to practice and develop their delivery skills on. Going forward our hope is that he will additionally engage with one of our Community Cook clubs, which will allow him to use his skills in a voluntary capacity in his own local area.

“John has discovered a new passion and with it a zest for life. He sees cooking alongside others as a positive social interaction that enables him to keep away from the less positive social interactions that he previously engaged with as a means of breaking his social isolation.

Flavour and Haver

“Back in 2015 we recognised the need to both expand the storage space for our Fareshare operation and that our teaching kitchen, co-located with the Fareshare depot was beginning to show its age. This was limiting our ability to reach more people with our Food Education programme. We began to seek out partnerships to help us achieve our vision of a new purpose built cook school. The teamwork involved and relationships developed has been an incredible and vital element of making our dream a reality. A broad group of capital funders, pro bono corporate supporters, and engagement with CRASH (the construction industry charity) made the Cyrenians dream of a purpose build cook school a reality.

“Flavour and Haver is an eight station domestic training kitchen and Cook School, with a training/meeting room, offices and an attached dining room. The Cook School offers a range of hands-on cooking courses including classes open to the public such as pastry and bread making, and the following classes that teach the basics of making every day healthy, cost-effective simple meals:

- Basic Food preparation and Budgeting skills courses, offered for free to anyone aged over 16

- Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) accredited courses in
 - Elementary Food Hygiene,
 - Elementary Cooking Skills and
 - GoodFood Good Health courses for those looking to train others.

“Cyrenians thank EMA, our pro bono architects, Mott MacDonald and Arcadis who have gifted us with many days of their professional services and management during the construction project. CRASH also opened the doors for many discounts and donations with around £40k of savings made over the life of the project.

“Thanks to Central Homes Development Group and F3 surveyors, Lucion Services and Peter Graham & Partners for their support with their professional services. Thanks to Systemwise and our volunteer Francois du Plessis for setting up our IT.

“Thanks to RRD Creative and Eastern Exhibition & Display for the wonderful graphics and signage.

“And of course huge thanks to our funders who made it happen – Bank of Scotland Foundation, CRASH, Scottish Government, Morrisons Foundation, The Queensberry Trust, The Clothworkers Foundation, Secureworks and QBE Foundation.

“Thanks also to our landlords C&W Assets who have supported us over many years since 1999.

“And of course all the funders that donate to support the work of our GoodFood Social Enterprises – there are too many to mention here, but thank you to all.

“We still have a further phase of works to go with our FareShare depot being upgraded too. And I think we should mention that given the scope of those works, more funding, volunteer support and pro bono work is always welcome!”

[Find out more here](#) about Cyrenians.