

# Add a dash of

# numeracy

A new cookery course has all the ingredients to spice up your informal learning programme

Reading Borough UNISON Branch has a novel way of developing people's appetite for Skills for Life – it's serving up cookery courses with the "secret ingredient" of numeracy tips.

"We decided to run cookery classes when we surveyed our members asking what sort of courses they'd be interested in and cookery was the most popular," explains Reading UNISON Assistant Branch Secretary Pat Kenny.

The branch piloted UNISON's new six-week Credit Crunch Cookery course earlier this year, with the aim of showing members how to cook healthy meals to a budget and encouraging them onto other UNISON courses, including Skills for Life.

The tutor was chef Kevin Muhammed, who won national recognition when he appeared on Channel 4 cookery show *Iron Chef UK* (see "Kevin serves up winning dish" sidebar).

The course embeds discussions on organic food, food packaging and recycling alongside numeracy issues such as converting between imperial and metric measurements, calculating cost per head and managing portion control.

ULR Roy Leader says members needed just one class to develop a taste for the course. "They've now expressed a desire to sign up to other courses and already roped in other colleagues," he said.

"We were so impressed with the way Kevin



PHOTOS: ANDREW WILKARD

READING BRANCH ORGANISED COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS WITH CHEF KEVIN MUHAMMED FOR ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK AFTER REQUESTS FROM MEMBERS FOR COOKERY COURSES

*"When we asked our members what courses they were interested in, cooking was the most popular"*



led the Credit Crunch Cookery course and we got such good feedback from participants, that we asked him to come back to Reading to do a demonstration during Adult Learners' Week," Pat says.

About 30 people attended Kevin's lunchtime demonstrations and tasting sessions, featuring both Caribbean and classic Italian cuisine, plus another nine took part in a family cooking session one evening.

The sessions went down a treat with participants. "Most people asked when we're going to do new courses," says Pat.



PHOTO: CHANNEL 4

*“Adult Learners’ Week really raised our profile – we’re getting emails every day asking when we’re putting on new courses”*

“We’re getting him back again this summer for a world cookery course which will also incorporate maths – a lot of people have this idea that they can’t do maths and we can show them that by weighing and measuring things in cooking, they’re using maths in their everyday lives,” says Pat.

The cookery event was part of the branch’s week-long Adult Learners’ Week programme (which also included digital photography, bike maintenance, yoga, tai chi, British Sign Language, French and Spanish) that the branch put together with teachers’ union NUT and the New Directions learning and employment service.

“It’s really raised our profile – I’m receiving emails from people every day now asking when we’re going to be putting on new courses,” says Pat.

“We’ve got to take it forward now – we want to get other unions in Reading involved, so we can organise learning across the unions.” ■

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## KEVIN SERVES UP WINNING DISH ON DAYTIME TV

Kevin Muhammed walked away with a dish of the day prize after appearing on the Channel 4 daytime hit Iron Chef UK.

Iron Chef bills itself as the ultimate high-energy cook-off, the sort of format that might emerge if you forced Masterchef into a blender with a martial arts movie and then filmed it in the Who Wants To Be A Millionaire studio.

The idea is relatively simple: each week, four challengers take on a different “iron chef” every day in front of a panel of food experts, trying to come up with a dish that scores more points with the judges than the resident’s.

Despite a series of mishaps including cutting a finger and even dropping his food on the floor, Kevin still managed to scoop the dish of the day prize on day three with his recipe for baked mackerel with okra.

“I’ve learnt some fantastic new techniques and ideas from the Michelin-starred chefs that I can incorporate into the credit crunch cookery course,” says Kevin.