

a dream come true

What started as a pipe dream for Harriet Elwes became a reality when she launched her new cookery school at Colesbourne Park two months ago. She talks to **Eve Holmes** about bread making and budding chefs. Photography **Clive Burling**

Harriet Elwes' love of bread has taken her on a journey that dreams are made of. With a long-standing passion to run a cookery school, Harriet has finally realised her dream. She has just launched The Foodworks Cookery School on the Colesbourne Estate in the heart of the Cotswolds offering a wide range of courses designed to inspire everyone from budding chefs to experienced cooks.

"It is a dream come true," says Harriet, who has spent the last two years designing the state-of-the-art school, recruiting six of the region's best chefs and project managing the entire build.

"There was a definite gap in the market for a cookery school in the Cotswolds," says Harriet, who is also the mother of two young daughters, Octavia and Jemima.

It was a passing comment to internationally-renowned master baker Maurice Chaplais about her dream of teaching the art of making bread that inspired her to start her cookery school.

"Every day on the school run I would go into Maurice's café and delicatessen in Cheltenham (Maison Chaplais) and tell him about my dream.

"He was so enthused about the idea and it inspired me to go ahead. Originally I thought of a school that just taught the art of bread making, but the idea evolved into a cookery school that would teach all types of cooking using the finest local and seasonal ingredients."

Harriet's father-in-law Henry Elwes (the Lord-Lieutenant for

Gloucestershire) gave her the contemporary venue for her kitchens on the Colesbourne Estate. Using her skills as a former garden designer, Harriet got to work sketching her vision for the school and two years on she has the business she always dreamt about.

"I did recces of other cookery schools first and then I began drawing sketches. I always knew how I wanted it to look."

Creating a friendly and welcoming venue, Harriet hopes to inspire a variety of cooks from young children (she has a day called Budding Chefs), to experienced cooks.

"I always wanted the school to appeal to all types of cooks and the courses are tailored for beginners to professional cooks.

"We cherry-picked six fantastic chefs and we are very lucky that they all loved the idea and were enthusiastic to come on board."

Courses at The Foodworks Cookery School include 'Aga Cooking', 'Bread Making', 'Fine Chocolates & Truffles' and 'Healthy Eating' to name a few.

Harriet believes that part of the school's success has been the new trend for people to entertain at home.

"The dinner party era is definitely coming back," says Harriet.

"The recession has inspired people to cook and entertain at home." Her 'Express Dinner Parties' course reflects this belief.

"We teach our clients about sourcing local ingredients and eating seasonally which is so important. We are thrilled to



have been given a further plot of land on the Estate that we can develop into a kitchen garden. It will be cultivated this year and we will start using it for ingredients next year. Henry has been fantastic and so supportive."

As Harriet's very first business venture the success of the Cookery School has exceeded her expectations. She is thrilled with the news that Waitrose would like to work with The Foodworks using the school for training their in-house chefs. And Harriet has recently been approached by Cowley Manor to offer residential cookery courses.


Previously dabbling in antiques, writing and working for the Sunday Times Style and Travel magazine, working in recruitment and garden design, Harriet also ran a Taverna in Athens.

"Cooking has always been my passion," says Harriet, whose two

daughters also love being in the kitchen and have been enthusiastic about her project from the start. "They both love cooking and can't wait to help at the Cookery School in the summer holidays!" says Harriet, who plans to introduce a three-day Kids' Camp next summer.

"Children love to cook. They are adventurous and they are really interested in the ingredients and where they come from. Cooking is so creative and rewarding."

Harriet admits her highlight so far after just two months in business is hearing the feedback from satisfied customers.

"Everyone is so positive so all the hard work has paid off! Customers have written to me saying that they found the courses relaxing and inspirational. Hearing that people are going away uplifted makes it all so rewarding." 

**'I LOVE THE FACT
THAT PEOPLE
WHO COME TO
THE COOKERY
SCHOOL GO
AWAY FEELING
UPLIFTED'**



The Foodworks Cookery School
Colesbourne Park
Nr. Cheltenham
Gloucestershire, GL53 9NP
Tel: 01242 870538;
info@foodworkscookeryschool.co.uk
www.foodworkscookeryschool.co.uk