

If you can stand the heat...



L'atelier des Chefs team (from left to right): Baptiste Aubour (Manager), Fran, Bois Bergerault (Founder), Chef Gregory Khellouf and Nicolas Bergerault (Founder).

For the first time outside of Europe and in the surrounds of a hotel, L'Atelier des Chefs has teamed up with Le Meridien Dubai, offering resourceful cooking classes for time conscious chef enthusiasts.

A unique concept to Dubai, L'Atelier des Chefs classes are tailored to people wanting to acquire culinary skills to not only impress their fellow dining companions, but to also be mastered in little time. Guest can partake in the "1 hour express" daytime class, learning the skills required to prepare the dish, actively participate in its creation and, most importantly, the chance to enjoy it!

Better still, a dessert is prepared for you while you attempt to manage the main dish (to the best of your abilities), with adequate time allocated to enjoy them both. And of course there is a take away option available for people on the run.

François Bergerault, co-founder with his brother Nicolas, notes, "Cooking is fundamentally a basic skill which everyone should have. It's something you can share with family and friends, and a great way to entertain during the credit crunch."

With over 15 schools in Europe, L'Atelier des Chefs hopes to reach out to the career minded who often rely heavily on prepared meals, educating them on the importance and ease of cooking, presenting and eating well.

While the express-lunch courses are offered throughout the week, guests can partake in evening classes covering several courses, while wine tasting and cocktail making sessions are sure to be in demand along with corporate sessions. Chef Gregory Khellouf, who conducts the classes, is also open to suggestions if you have any burning desires to master a particular dish that is easily adapted within the set time frames.

For more information go to www.atelierdeschefsdubai.com

Just five questions

Founder Nicolas Bergerault had time for just five quick questions!

Why do you think people have lost so much confidence in cooking that they now need lessons?

The new generation of young adults were educated by mothers who started to work? Thus they have never been taught how to cook. In addition to this, the development of frozen prepared food, microwave and food deliveries have not helped to grow the wish to learn. Suddenly in the 2000s, people want to rediscover the pleasure of cooking, to gather their loved ones, take care of their health through better food and even save money. They need cookery classes that are adapted to their needs - not too long, not too complicated and not too expensive

Is this part of the same trend that sees many celebrity chefs but fewer people cooking than ever?

Celebrity chefs offer great food experiences in restaurants, but they also prove that cooking can be a pleasure and a great way to prove people you care for them. However, they can also be a little bit intimidating because their cooking is very high level. People need to be reassured they can cook at home, too.

Do you think the very multi-cultural mix of Dubai will force you to develop different kinds of menus?

Of course. Dubai is a fantastic cultural and food melting pot. In L'Atelier des Chefs, we will definitely teach all cuisines from all over the world. People travel a lot and part of their traveling experiences is linked to their food souvenirs. We need to feed them with these culinary memories, too.

What inspired you to found L'Atelier des Chefs?

Being an amateur chef myself, I was amazed by the power of good food on my friends! I knew they would love to rediscover the pleasure of cooking, too. François my brother wanted to start a business. We decided together to join our forces to invent a new generation of cookery classes that would change the vision people had on cooking, forever.

What is your personal best dish? Who taught you to cook it?

My best personal dish is Le Lièvre à la Royale. I learnt it from a very old cook book and it is just amazing!



Vanilla infused fillet of hamour and mashed sweet potatoes

SERVES 6

Ingredients:

6 x 150g hamour fillets
500g charlotte potatoes
300g sweet potatoes
60g butter
100ml olive oil
2 vanilla bean pods

Method:

1 Preheat oven to 180C/160C fan/ gas 4. Peel and cut the potatoes into cubes then cook them in a pot with salted water. Once the potatoes are cooked, crush and whip them with a whisk, adding butter as you mash them. Season accordingly.

2 Slice open the vanilla pod lengthways, then using the back of the knife, scrape out the seeds. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and heat the vanilla seeds slowly for 3 mins until just warm.

3 Add the hamour fillets to the frying pan and cook for 3 mins on each side, lower the heat and let them cook for another 2 mins. Season with salt and pepper. Place the fillets in the oven for another 5 mins to cook through.

4 Serve the fillets on top of the mashed potatoes and decorate with fresh herbs or salad. Drizzle the vanilla scented olive oil over the fish.

