

# BLOKES FIND THEIR KITCHEN CONFIDENCE

## POLLY SIMONS

When Peter Weste asked his mother to make him a carpetbag steak for his 16th birthday, it was the beginning of a lifelong love affair with food.

"I was interested in food even then and have been ever since," he said. "But anyone can serve lobster and make it taste good, you just cut it in half, stick it on a plate and stick a knife in it. But taking a couple of vegetables and making them taste good is much harder."

Unfortunately, his mates didn't share the same sentiments, so 12 months ago Mr Weste decided to put his money where his mouth was. With his wife Janine, a former sous chef at the Intercontinental Hotel, he decided to open a cooking school and Cooking for Blokes was born.

"Everybody can cook. If they didn't they would die of starvation," he said. "But where men fall down is confidence. Confidence is their number-one issue."

Placing an advertisement on a community noticeboard near their home in Artarmon, within an hour they had their first phone call. Now, Cooking for Blokes offers weekly cooking classes for men in the kitchens of Chatswood's Dougherty Centre.

"One of the most common mistakes blokes make is they think that if something's more expensive, it must automatically be better, so they end up buying scotch fillet for a stew," he said. "Or else they can follow a recipe but they don't know why they're doing it. We try and get them to understand."

To remedy the situation, Cooking for Blokes offers both corporate and speciality classes. But Mr Weste said it was the six-week basic classes that were most popular, teaching blokes the basics of cookery and helping them become more confident in the kitchen.

"We teach them the traditional way of doing things, the way Janine was taught and



Cooking for Blokes: Peter Weste is teaching men the basics of cooking, helping them discover a new confidence in the culinary arts.

the way her teacher was taught," he said.

Classes include everything from basic knife skills to stocks and boning chickens. The result, he said, was often a revelation for the students. "We have blokes who run coffee shops who come in to learn a bit more about things and they'll come in on the last day saying that their chef has been pulling the wool over their eyes," he said. "Or they'll be able to walk into a butcher's shop and say with confidence that they want a rib eye steak and some veal shanks because they know what to do with them."

In fact, classes have proven so popular that

women now want to be part of the action, and inquiries have come from as far away as Iraq and Brazil.

"We get women coming in saying 'I am really rubbish at cooking, I'm worse than most blokes,'" he said. "So the women come to our classes because it means that, rather than standing there like idiots in a more advanced class, they can stand there like idiots with the blokes. They fit right in."

"So many people these days want instant gratification, they want to go down to the shops and buy their chicken kebabs and cook them, and to take their McCain's vegies and

put them in the microwave," he said. "But that's not cooking, that's assembling food. Then we teach them how to make risotto and taste the difference and it's chalk and cheese. It's like drinking a warm flat beer instead of an ice-cold beer straight from the fridge. Which do you want?"

Limited spots are still available in Cooking for Blokes courses on July 29 and August 5. Visit [www.cookingforblokes.com.au](http://www.cookingforblokes.com.au).



See more of Cooking For Blokes: Check out their demonstration video on the Northside website. Just visit [www.northside.com.au](http://www.northside.com.au) and click on the link.