

Patients learn to cook up a hearty dinner



HEALTHY EATING: Chef Bosco Santimano with staff and cardiac patients

SCOTTISH heart attack patients are being offered cookery classes on the NHS to help improve their unhealthy diets.

Heart disease, which kills nearly 10,000 people in Scotland every year, is closely linked to fat-laden, cholesterol heavy, meals.

Under the new scheme, the first of its kind in the UK, cardiac patients at the Astley Ainslie Hospital in Edinburgh will be given free lessons on creating heart-friendly dishes.

A state-of-the-art kitchen and lecture facility has been built within the cardiac unit and it is hoped the course could be extended throughout the rest of the country if successful.

Yesterday 18 patients cooked up a healthy stir-fry in the first 90-minute class, which is being taught by chef Bosco Santimano, from Peebles.

He said: "A lot of people don't have cookery skills and that is why they buy ready meals or take-aways or go out to eat and don't get proper nutrients." Santimano approached the NHS with the idea after setting up social enterprise company You Can Cook last year to promote healthy cooking.

He said the informal lessons, which also advise on bud-

By **Judith Duffy**

geting skills and food labelling, had originally been scheduled to run in November, but had been brought forward because of a high level of interest.

He said: "I used to work in the NHS years ago and when you work in hospital you see a lot of diet-related illnesses such as obesity."

"This is the first time an NHS hospital has come on board and put in a custom-built unit on their own premises for this type of scheme."

"The idea is to replicate it throughout Scotland and the UK eventually."

Cookery classes are also planned for stroke patients, diabetics and allergy sufferers.

Ben McKendrick, policy and public affairs manager for British Heart Foundation Scotland, said he was not aware of any other hospitals in the UK offering such a service.

"We urge other hospitals throughout the UK to consider following Edinburgh's example of offering targeted cooking classes," he said.

Dr Brian Pentland, clinical lead in rehabilitation medicine at NHS Lothian, said: "These classes will play a key role in the patients' recovery process and reducing the likelihood of future illness."

'Many people don't get proper nutrition'

Bosco Santimano

