

Family Matters

● money ● health ● lifestyle ● food ● fashion ●

Yes, you can cook promises Bosco

By Kirsten Mann

A BORDERS-BASED cook is proving you don't have to be Jamie Oliver to teach people how to eat healthily.

Originally from Bombay but now living in Peebles, Bosco Santimano set up the social enterprise initiative You Can Cook in October 2007.

Together with his team of six cooks he encourages people to abandon ready meals in favour of freshly prepared food. He does this through cookery demonstrations in village halls, miners' clubs, universities, schools and even hospital wards.

Nutritious

Arriving with an electric hob, basic cooking equipment and a bag of ingredients, Bosco and his team show how to prepare a quick and nutritious meal on a budget.

Their recipes encourage use of local produce but the dishes often have an international flavour.

Hardly surprising when you discover the other cooks include Bosco's Italian wife Hanisa, Mona Taylor who was brought up in a large Irish family living in England, Connie Poon from Hong Kong, Alex Wilson from Peru and Brits Jeremy Cunningham and Doug Clark.

What is a surprise is that none are trained chefs. And



■ Bosco teaches students how to live well on £15 a week.

that's exactly where Bosco attributes the success of his not-for-profit organisation.

"We prefer to call ourselves community cooks," he explains. "Individuals who cook good food at home from scratch.

"People realise they can do what we do. And it's a two-way system. During a demonstration we share what we know on the understanding people will share with us something they know."

Although he was brought up in Bombay (now Mumbai) the 41-year-old learned his culinary skills from his family who are originally from Goa.

Having previously worked as a steward on a cruise ship and in kitchens in London, Edinburgh and Pitlochry, Bosco has run the personal chef business, Aromatic Cuisine, for six years.

"I go into people's homes, prepare traditional Goan recipes, entertain while I'm cooking, clean up and come home," he smiles.

It was a report on Scotland's health he read while working as an NHS health care assistant that inspired him to set up You Can Cook.

"I was shocked," he recalls. "One in five adults is classified as clinically obese.

"I wanted to extend what I

the form of free demos or subsidised cooking classes for people on low incomes.

Despite starting up in less-than-affluent times the venture has never made a loss.

"We've been hired by Scottish Borders Housing Association to provide a programme for young tenants. We do demos and tastings and they take home any leftovers.

"As with all our clients, we teach them how to cook cheap and simple recipes.

"We also run classes for students. We show them how they can live on £15 and still eat healthy food.

"And last month we started a contract working with people who have long term illnesses and impaired mobility.

Social

"One woman who attended a four-week course with us was so horrified at what she was feeding her children she enrolled on a health and nutrition course at Napier University."

But Bosco reckons his workshops aren't just cooking classes, they're social events.

"They're really quite fun," he smiles. "We had a man who didn't speak a word at the first session, was still a bit reserved at the second, but by the third was chatting to everyone.

"Then on the fourth he presented the class with a cake he'd baked himself.

"He said he'd never been in a situation where he felt so welcomed, listened to and appreciated. It gave us a very different perspective on the positive influence of our courses."

INDEX

Your money

Be a winner in the loyalty card game — **P48**

Days out



Take your map and compass for a run — **P49**

Doc Replies

She's worried mouth ulcers will choke her — **P50**

Slice of Life



Having her babies made Sarah well — **P51**

Food

