



ALL ANGELS: Evelyn Davis, Jenna Morton and Luke Bearsley

In the MIX

WE HAVE Jamie Oliver to thank for much of the surge in healthy eating initiatives that have popped up across the UK over the last few years.

Children across the land are being urged to ditch the burgers for beans, but in South London it's not all down to Jamie. One Blackheath resident is behind some of the action.

Joy Neal, a former primary school teacher at Tidemill School in Deptford, satisfied her passion for teaching and cooking after setting up Munchkin's cookery school for children, based at St Michael's Church Hall in Blackheath.

More than three years on, the thriving business takes bookings for holiday workshops and after-school clubs for children aged four to 11, teaching them how to prepare and cook healthy meals.

Sourcing fresh seasonal ingredients, a typical workshop sees children whipping up anything from noodles to soups, salads to cakes and even curries.



LITTLE CHEFS: Jessica Mather and Tabitha Evenett

NATALIE LI went along to Munchkin's cookery school to see how Joy Neal is teaching kids to cook

Then the kids take it all home to share with the family.

"I disagree with dumbing down food for children," reveals Joy.

"Often children's food can be over-simplified and people stick to fairy cake recipes. Here at Munchkin's we have a very hands-on approach, cooking a mixture of savoury meals – even chillies and curries – which might seem too complicated for children.

"During the Easter break, we hope to get cooking stir fries, spicy noodles, traditional Easter simnel loaves, hot cross buns and chocolate treats."

Joy adds: "It is not just about cooking. There are very obvious rewards from coming to Munchkin's – it not only helps boost the children's confidence and self-esteem, it equips them with those independent skills to survive."

❑ Munchkin's cookery school is at 1 Pond Road, St Michael's Church Road, Blackheath, SE3 9LJ. Call 020 8269 1331. Easter workshops take place from April 6-10 and April 13-17. There is also a one-off parent and child cookery day on Easter Monday.