

# Recipe for Success

by Joseph Jones

I wondered how much there would be to write about a cookery class. How wrong I was! Within minutes it's clear that Jasmin Owen, owner and proprietor of Small Cooks Big Meals, which offers cooking classes of varying levels to domestic helpers and maids, cares deeply for the women that she teaches and provides them with a lot more than simply recipes.

A background in advertising and corporate training may not seem the natural launching pad for a cookery school. But Jasmin feels it gave her the ideal tools – along with her fluent English and Malay, and a smattering of Tagalog – to communicate with her mainly Filipina and Indonesian students. Apart from wanting to share her passion for food and cookery, it is her goal, she says, to empower these women to be able to decide their own future. Many of her students, it seems, aim to open a restaurant when they return to their home country, but Jasmin would also like at least some of them to learn to become cookery teachers themselves.


Although it obviously benefits domestic helpers to attend her courses, the obvious attraction for their employers is having a maid who can cook classic Western dishes such as shepherd's pie and roast chicken, or even make dishes like quiches or pork with prunes from scratch. Small Cooks Big Meals offers a variety of courses, from basic to intermediate, most of which comprise four lessons

over four weeks and start at \$300. It also offers more specialised courses such as health-conscious cookery and baking classes.

Jasmin also teaches other basic aspects of a domestic helper's work, such as English pronunciation, basic health and safety and good hygiene. She instils in her students an understanding of waste management, including keeping track of the expiry date of perishable goods, which is of cost benefit to the employer, too.

She also teaches her students the importance of communication and asking questions, even if that means admitting that they do not understand something or asking for guidance, and accepting responsibility for any mistakes they may make. In many Asian cultures, this can be seen as a loss of face, she explains, but most Western employers would prefer their maids to approach them directly with a problem rather than find out about it later.

Small Cooks Big Meals donates five percent of each course fee to an organisation called Serving our World, which helps needy children in communities around the globe. Closer to home, Jasmin is putting her own domestic helper through a hospitality management course.

If you'd like to assist your domestic helper to develop her skills – or you're just craving some good home-cooking – Small Cooks Big Meals could be the answer for both of you. 



Call Small Cooks Big Meals at 9666 7367 or visit [www.scbm.com.sg](http://www.scbm.com.sg).