



# OVER THE TABLE ORLANDO MURRIN

*Learning to cook tasty, nutritious food should be on every student curriculum*

What was the first thing you ever cooked? From an early age, my mother encouraged my brother and me to join in, trimming sprouts or stirring the gravy. Also underfoot was Jane, our Yorkshire terrier, hoping some tasty scrap might fall her way. The Murrin family kitchen must have been quite a *mêlée*.

As far as I'm concerned, you're never too young to start cooking – there are too many cuisines, techniques and flavours to fit into a lifetime. Living a few doors away is my friend Amy, whose 18-year-old son loves making pizza and pasta from scratch. When the world ran out of type 00 flour a few months ago, Laurie turned to sourdough instead. He made some good loaves, but didn't enjoy the routine of feeding the starter. "I'm too young to be a parent," he said.

For youngsters off to university or living away from home for the first time, cooking for yourself can seem daunting. When Charlie, son of food writer Lorna Wing, went off to uni, she thought she'd check out his on-campus kitchen. "It was an eye-opener," she said. "Just one shelf of a shared fridge, a tiny cupboard for ingredients and equipment. And most of the time they are cooking in a rush, half-awake, or hung over." Surely not.

Lorna is the sort of cook who can turn her hand to anything; in past lives she's been caterer to the stars, consultant to top

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food brands and an award-winning recipe writer. Inspired by Charlie and his friends, last year she launched an online cookery course, which can be taken over 12 weeks (as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award) or fast tracked in two, for those uni students. There's a version for carnivores, another plant-based, and the recipes are adroitly engineered to what might be described as 'primitive' cooking conditions. Students from all over the world (currently including Australia, New Zealand, Luxembourg and Hong Kong) send in pictures or videos via WhatsApp, and Lorna replies personally, with feedback and encouragement. All this, amazingly, for £150.

I wish I'd had Lorna's recipes when I was at university. Corn and Cheddar chowder, nasi goreng fried rice, Tuscan sausage stew, spicy peanut butter pasta and dal in a dash would have been a vast improvement on spaghetti alla can of chopped tomatoes. (Don't try this at home, but I used to boil the spaghetti in my electric kettle.) In my last term, I threw an actual dinner party, the starter of which was grapefruit segments in *crème de menthe*. It looked pretty, in a neon sort of way, but made the *coq au vin* taste like mouthwash.

The more I cook, the more there seems to be to learn. I've been loving all the free classes and tutorials on Zoom and Facebook, but I'm glad to see the Waitrose Cookery Schools are back and booming, albeit with smaller class numbers because of social distancing. And no Yorkshire terriers.

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*Orlando hosts the BBC Good Food Podcast with Tom Kerridge and is president of the Guild of Food Writers @orlandomurrin*