

FOOD Bites

Fresh bread, awesome cookies and food as medicine

BREAD ANGELS

A network of local bread-makers is springing up around the UK to bring freshly made loaves to their communities. 'Bread angels' can bake when it suits them, and sell to individuals, shops, markets or other groups in their communities. Catherine Coyne set up Kingston-based Red Gate Bakery a couple of years ago, and recently held a workshop to teach others the skills. "It is immensely fulfilling to create something wholesome and delicious for my local community," she says. www.breadangels.com



LALLAPOLOSA'S COOKIE BAKING COURSE FOR KIDS



As an avid cook, I love it when my kids bake with me. The downside is the mess that ensues, despite the best of their intentions. So a kids' cooking lesson elsewhere always gets my attention – and this one particularly so – I have tried to bake cookies – only the once, and I swore (in every possible sense) that I wouldn't try them again. Rather than crisp cute discs, I ended up with a sprawl of choc-chip mess glued to a baking tray. Lallapolosa is set in an old Victorian shop (complete with original tiles) and is run by Elyse Savage and husband Adam Jones. It's a cafe, bakery, as well as the venue for various baking courses and parties. I brought along my five-year-old on a late Sunday afternoon and the lovely Elyse calmly took us through the basics of cookie dough, with recipes for both choc chip and ginger cookies. Separating eggs with our hands was a particular – messy – highlight for my son. And I picked up great tips on how to get the right texture, which had clearly been my downfall before. The results were impressive – two batches of tasty cookies that my son proudly took to school the next day.

■ lallapolosabaking.co.uk



A HEALTHIER WAY TO EAT OUT

We try the new seasonal menu at The Willow, a restaurant which has 'food as medicine' as its mantra

If you are of the belief that healthy eating and tasty food are polar opposites, The Willow hopes to change your mind. While I do have a keen interest in eating well, when I eat out my mindset is one of treating myself, so I was reassured by its menu that features the likes of meatballs, steak and duck confit. Locally sourced ingredients are cooked to preserve as much nutritional value as possible, dishes are colourful, with the aim of providing a wide range of vitamins, and many diets are catered for including vegan, Paleo, gluten-free, low-carb and low FODmap. The drinks list also features natural wines and gluten-free beers.

I chose a quinoa salad to start – a zesty dish of fresh herbs and delicious vegetables. My dining companion was wowed by a dish of 'tipsy' mussels. For mains, a seaweed tagliatelle with shitake mushrooms surprised and delighted – with all the texture and taste of the traditional pasta yet made from seaweed. Brill with samphire rainbow salad sounded worthy but was a big juicy piece

of fish, perfectly seasoned, and the salad was packed with flavour. We added in a portion of sweet potato fries but found them quite strongly flavoured, cooked as they were in coconut oil.

The Willow's desserts don't have processed sugar for sweetness – there is ice cream on the menu, as well as a range of 'cheesecakes' made with cashew nut and coconut, the two we sampled were both delicious.

It was all a far cry from my initial apprehension that we'd be leaving a healthy eating restaurant hungry. And I felt quite smug that I'd had good food and wine as well as giving my body a much needed vitamin boost. The setting is pleasant with a mural of trees and the ceiling lit to look like a patch of blue sky. The Willow is a great spot – those on restricted diets can eat well and be confident that their dining companions will not feel that they are, in any way, being restricted, too.

■ 16 The Triangle, KT1. www.yourwillow.co.uk

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