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Issue 13 Winter 2014/2015



London Mums

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SPECIAL**



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Aldo Zilli



**Sir Quentin
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Star

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Editor's letter

Dear London Mums

After such a long hot Summer here is the perfect issue for you to snuggle up with.

A new acronym is out in town, FoMo, which perfectly describes the Fear of Missing Out that London Mums often feel. London has so much, too much to offer and we find ourselves to constantly have to choose between equally amazing activities. But I have no doubt that London

Mums won't miss their very own annual Christmas Party on 21 November (details inside and online), which is our highlight of the year.

For this Foodie Special issue we feature exclusive 'mouth-watering' interviews with celebrity Chef Aldo Zilli and The Great British Bake Off Star mum Cat Dresser. Both talk about their guilty pleasures and food they prepare for their kids.

The Apprentice mentor and recently nominated Baroness Karren Brady is the star mumpreneur in our cover interview. She talks about entrepreneurship, life skills, her ideas to encourage young London entrepreneurs and what she would do if she became Mayor for the day.

You will love our chat with Britain's favourite children's illustrator Sir Quentin Blake who reveals exclusive anecdotes about his fruitful relationship with Roald Dahl, as well as interviews with super mums and authors of new children's book series Hattie B, the Magical Vet.

Along with all of these celebrity interviews, we've also included an extensive Christmas Gift Guide to help you decide on those all important prezzies for the kids.

Last but not least Dr Ellie Cannon answers all your kids' health dilemmas in our popular Agony Aunt column.

Check out the London Mums website londonmumsmagazine.com for more articles, interviews and ideas for family fun.

Spread the word – London Mums is totally and utterly FREE!

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Keeeeeeeeeeeeeep Reading!

Monica

Monica Costa *Editor in Chief, Founder of London Mums and mum of eight-year-old Diego.* monica@londonmums.org.uk
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LONDON MAYOR



'Forums such as London Mums and Work Your Way are invaluable for forging new relationships, sparking ideas and providing advice in an easy, accessible way.'
Mayor of London, Boris Johnson

Editorial

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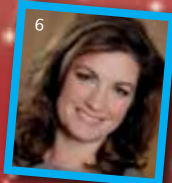
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STAR MUMPRENEUR POWER WOMAN AND THE APPRENTICE STAR KARREN BRADY:

'BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND YOU WILL SUCCEED!'

Editor Monica Costa caught up with Super London Mumpreneur Karren Brady to talk about entrepreneurship, life sills, and her ideas to encourage young London entrepreneurs. Very recently Brady was elevated to the House of Lords as a Conservative life Peer, taking the title Baroness Brady of Knightsbridge. But the new Apprentice's candidates will address her simply as Karren!

Q: You run many successful businesses. How do you manage to divide your time?

KB: It's about accepting you can only do what you can do, and only be in one place at a time. I have a saying that nothing is work unless you'd rather be doing something else, and between my businesses and my family there is nothing else I would rather be doing – so being happy. Your career gives you the energy you need to keep working hard at it. It's also about juggling priorities and being organised. I work out a clear agenda for my day and what I need to achieve. But, I try to be practical and accept that during the week I work to whatever time I want but Friday, Saturday and Sunday I only deal with urgent matters and make time to be with my children and my family. I also make the most of my time – so I don't go anywhere without my Blackberry, my diary, a notepad and pen!

Q: Do you think you have the right balance between work and family time?

KB: I'm not sure a perfect balance exists and actually I think it can be harmful to chase after it. For me, it's more about focusing on the situation you're in. When you're at home, you need to focus on your family and when you're at work that needs to be your main priority. Accept that at some points in your life work will be more important than home, and home will be far more important than work.

Q: It is often said that a recession is a great time to start a business. Do you think that's true? What tips would you give to anyone considering starting up in this climate?

KB: I think starting a business in any climate can be difficult, and whatever the climate it's important to do your research, and test your product or service, so you are sure you both understand the market you're entering and genuinely know if your idea will work and that you have properly spotted a gap in the market. Take the time to discover what's in the marketplace already and where the opportunity exists for your new venture. Invest time in developing a thorough business plan and speak with people you

know who are successful. As well as a business plan write an action plan, what are you going to do by when to ensure your business gets off the ground. Their advice and guidance will be invaluable. Finally, be clear about what you want to achieve so you understand both the risks and what success looks like.

Q: London Mums and Work Your Way recently held a conference on "Nurturing female entrepreneurship through the power of collaboration" with the support of the Mayor of London. What do you think is the secret of a great business partnership?

KB: Business partnerships are the same as any other relationship and are founded on great communication and being able to compromise. The goal of any partnership is to share responsibilities and the benefits of different skill sets. But, this also means you are likely to not always agree. That's why communication is vital, so you can work together to find a solution.

Q: You are an Ambassador for LifeSkills, created with Barclays to inspire business, schools and young people. What do you do as part of this initiative and what is it?

KB: I believe that we all have a role to play in helping young people reach their potential. Having two teenagers of my own, I know first-hand how important it is to support a young person as they transition from school into work and support them to fulfil their potential. I wanted to do more than simply help my own family, which is why I became an Ambassador for LifeSkills to raise awareness of the challenges young people face and to inspire them about the future. The issues around youth employability are too complex for any one person or group to solve, which is why as with so many things, it's about collaboration. Businesses, education providers and families have to work together to ensure young people are prepared for work before they leave education and can be successful in the future.

Q: How does LifeSkills bring business, schools and government together to remove the barriers young people face in moving from school to work?

KB: LifeSkills is a free curriculum linked education and work experience programme that gives access to the advice, support and opportunities young people need to be ready for the world of work. Young people, either at home or at school, can use the LifeSkills website to complete a range of interactive resources to learn everything from how to write a CV through to matching their skills to a career. The more tasks they complete, the more points they can gain to unlock access to work experience opportunities. Teachers

can also use LifeSkills resources to help match their pupils to local work experience opportunities. Additionally, the programme provides schools with a range of free, lesson plans, workshops and resources for teachers to help pupils aged 11 to 19 develop the skills employers most seek.

Q: Do you believe children are born with talent or rather that talent can be developed with hard work? How do you generally spot talented young people?

KB: I believe every child has their own unique talent but they need nurturing and support to bring these attributes to fruition. When I was at school I felt I wasn't naturally talented at anything. I wasn't keen on sports, I wasn't the best at art and I wasn't academic, yet through hard work and dedication I have gone on to have a fantastic career with some unforgettable experiences. Young people need help and encouragement from those around them to enable them to realise what they are good at. Work experience is so important because often when in a real-work situation young people will realise they have all sorts of talents that simply aren't acknowledged or used in the classroom.

When recruiting for entry level roles, I'm really looking for potential. If the young person I'm interviewing has a great attitude, enthusiasm, a passion to succeed and demonstrates they are willing to work very hard then I'm sold.

Q: What is your top advice to women who would like to go back to a career after years of being off work due to family commitments?

KB: It can be tough for anyone going back to a career after time away, so it's understandable to feel nervous. To help you get back into the swing of work, I'd suggest doing research and reading up on industry news before you start. Try to stay in contact with your colleagues and organise an informal catch up on what's been happening and what has changed in the workplace since you were there. All of this will help you not to feel overwhelmed on your first day back.

Through this process, it's important to continue believing in yourself. It's easy to doubt yourself and lose momentum and confidence, especially if you have been out of work for a while. And don't forget that you would have learnt a lot of skills running a family – like budget control, time management, planning, organisation, diary management etc – and these skills are transferable. Also you need a really good CV, so invest some time in writing one, ask for honest feedback from people you trust to give you good feedback. Believe in yourself and you will succeed!

Q: If you were Mayor of London for the day what would you do to make the Capital a business friendlier place for young and new entrepreneurs?

KB: I think the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, is doing a fantastic job at helping young people and supporting businesses throughout the UK. But, there is always more to be done to encourage young entrepreneurs. If I could do one thing to help, it would be to encourage more businesses to connect with schools and offer pre-work training such as traineeships and apprenticeships that will inspire the next generation about the world of business.



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Monica Costa, Editor, London Mums Magazine

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Sir Quentin Blake: Inside Stories

Editor Monica Costa recently interviewed Sir Quentin Blake, one of the UK's most important and best-loved illustrators whose work is recognised worldwide particularly his iconic illustrations in the books of Roald Dahl. He has illustrated over 300 books so far. Still incredibly active at the age of 82, Blake has recently driven and launched The House of Illustration, a unique gallery dedicated to the art of Illustration headquartered at King's Cross. This new art space was made possible through a series of fundraising efforts, including a 2010 art auction at Sotheby's, but Blake first had the idea a decade ago.

The House of Illustration's inaugural exhibition is *Inside Stories*, a landmark show that offered a unique insight into the origins of some of Blake's most characteristic and popular creations, from his illustrations to Roald Dahl's *The Twits* and *Danny the Champion of the World* to his own *Clown* and *The Boy in The Dress* by David Walliams, together with illustrations to books by John Yeoman, Russell Hoban and Michael Rosen. The exhibition brought together first roughs and storyboards, many never shown before, with finished artwork to demonstrate how ideas evolved, often in close collaboration with the authors. It showed how Blake's wide range of different techniques and media including inks, watercolours and pastels applied with a variety of touch, in response to the particular mood of a book and the nature of its characters, to create his distinctive and unforgettable illustrations.



What does
an
Illustrator
think about?



Q: Would you like to share any anecdotes on Roald Dahl overall experience or the time spent with him working together?

QB: We were put together because he moved publishers a lot. They suggested to him he might write a picture book, something he had done before. And that was *The Enormous Crocodile*. It was a wonderful picture book, full of things to draw.

It was quite long and they were looking for someone to do the illustrations so I did some samples and got the job. I didn't know then I was going to do anything else with Roald.

Then he wrote *The Twits* and I did that. Then the BFG came along and I got to know him a lot better. Roald or the publishers would send me the manuscript. I would read it and make some drawings of some things I thought were good to draw and what the characters would look like.

Then I would go to Gipsy House (where Roald Dahl lived with his family in Buckinghamshire until his death in 1990) and we talked about it.

There was a lot of conversations about that and that became a pattern for it. And then I would go off and do a whole set of rough drawings and would go back to him.

After working intensively, we always had dinner with his family and I got to meet his wife and children and grandchildren.

It helped working so closely together. If he wanted to make changes I would make them for him and it was marvellous to work with him. We were just there trying to make the best possible books.

What was very nice for me is that he wanted as many drawings as possible. (He giggles).

Q: Were you drawing in front of him during these creative sessions?

QB: Sometimes when we were working on the BFG we did some drawings then and there. But mostly I did the drawings in my studio and I took them down to him. We looked at them on his sofa, where his dog always sat next while Roald gave him Smarties as special treats.

Naughty Roald Dahl... but apparently the dog lived a long life (according to his grandson Luke whom I recently met)!

Q: Have you ever been inspired by Roald Dahl and his environment?

QB: Sometimes. You would have to adapt to the book you were doing. Danny, the Champion of the World, for instance, is about the part of England Roald lived in and wanted to live in with its woods and the pheasants, that rural life which he liked very much.

Of course you are inspired by the books with such wonderful characters in them, but you also had to adapt to the atmosphere of them. I put that one in the illustrations for Danny the Champion of the World, which was a clear case where you had to draw lyrical pictures of the countryside.

The two books The Twits and Danny, the Champion of the World are such a contrast. One of the things that was interesting about working with Roald was you never knew what the next book was going to be.

Q: Yours are now classic illustrations that everybody knows. Where do you generally get inspiration from to produce such great pieces of art?

QB: A few years ago there was a piece of research about whose names children knew and they seemed to know mine more than other people. This is very nice for me.

I have never known where the inspiration comes from. It comes from drawing really. You start drawing something and then you start drawing around the

book, and it starts to come to life because you imagine that you are those people. It's like an actor. I hardly ever draw from life or anything like that. I draw out of imagination. You just have to try and imagine you are those people and get to know them.

Inspiration is not like a flash of light where you say 'wow, I have it now!'. It is rather something that accumulates and keeps growing and gradually takes shape.

Q: What suggestion would you give to a young talented child who would love to pursue a career as an illustrator?

QB: There is no structure as a profession. You can go to an art school. You need to do a lot of drawing. You need to draw a lot of different things, as many as you can. You need to draw things in front of you. I did that a lot at one time. Some people only draw what is in front of them. There are some brilliant people who can report and record what is in front of them. You need to find out who you are. Do lots of it and also draw with lots of different things because that makes it more exciting. You draw with anything!

Illustration has been one of the most distinctive strands in the history of British art. It's one of the things that the British are good at – we don't say that often enough.

Illustrations help you want to read. Children look at pictures and they can read before they can read books.

The 100th anniversary of WW1 has also helped raise awareness for the importance of illustrations. Posters from the war had an extraordinary effect on people. Everything we buy on a daily basis is influenced by illustrations.

Q: Has your style changed since the early years?

QB: It hasn't changed. It became recognisable when I was about 20 something. That is almost 60 years ago! It hasn't changed but it keeps modifying itself when I encounter another book.





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CELEBRITY CHEF ALDO ZILLI

**"TOO MUCH SUGAR TURNS MY CHILDREN
INTO LITTLE ANIMALS!"**

London Mums Contributor
Sanjeeta Bains, creator of lifestyle
magazine The Pleasure Principle
thepleasureprinciple.com, caught up
with London resident Aldo Zilli to talk
about London, family life and of course
food. He is Italian and has two children
Rocco, eight and Twiggy, seven, and he
is keen to discuss the importance of the
right diet for children.

Q: How long have you lived in London?

AZ: 38 years. I first came here at the age of 20. I rented a room at Clapham North where I paid £9 a week rent! I remember having to put money in the electricity meter, which always ran out on the middle of the night! I didn't like Clapham back then. It was very rough and there were no bars and restaurants, not like today!

Q: What is your favourite area in London?

AZ: I love Soho – it's a great bustling area and it's where I opened my first two restaurants (Zilli Fish and Zilli Café) so the place has lots of amazing memories for me. I'm back working in Soho – I've just joined Soho Radio.

Q: What are you doing on Soho Radio?

AZ: I present a show that's mixture of music, chat, guests and food. I share recipes and tastings live on air. We just did a baked beans tasting challenge!

Q: What are your favourite London attractions?

AZ: This Summer for the first time we didn't go on holiday abroad as a family and I feel I re-discovered London all over again. I took the kids to Madame Tussauds and the London Zoo, which they loved. We've also spent a lot of time in Hyde Park. I also really love going to Harrods but I was sad to see they closed the Petshop department – it was an amazing place.

Q: What would you do if you were Mayor Of London for the day?

AZ: I like cycling around London but I always wear a helmet so as Mayor, I would make all cyclists wear helmets. I cringe when I see tourists jumping on Boris bikes with no helmets on. It's crazy!

Q: In the Nineties you were renowned for your celebrity friends, are you still in touch with them?

AZ: I'm still good friends with actress Michelle Collins. She is Godmother to my son Rocco and we've remained close. But I live a different life these days. I don't allow many people in my house. I cherish family time.

Q: How would you describe your parenting style?

AZ: Very Italian. We're always together as a family, eating round the table. I discuss things properly with my kids. I like to spend as much time as possible with them. I like to take them out and do fun things. My wife Nikki is a lot stricter than me but our styles complement each other.

Q: What do you like to cook for Rocco and Twiggy?

AZ: We obviously all like pasta! I hide vegetables and fish in the pasta so they will eat it. I like to make it less pasta and more protein. I'm always watching what they're eating and putting in their mouth. The right diet for children is very important. I have noticed when my kids go out on play dates they come back like two different children. They're like little animals! They loaded up with sweets and chocolate, have got a sugar rush and don't know what to do with it.



Q: What is your guilty pleasure?

AZ: Chocolate. I've developed a real sweet tooth in the last few years. Sometimes I can really let myself so I have to be careful. It's so easy to buy a chocolate for a quick fix. I wish there were more health food shops in this country. There are too many coffee shops where I can buy chocolate. My daughter Twiggy also loves chocolate. I bake a chocolate cake at home occasionally but not too often!

Q: You are from the Central Italian region of Abruzzo. How has that influenced your cooking?

AZ: The first eleven years of my life were spent on a farm in the mountains and then we moved by the sea so I like to use lots of vegetables and seafood in my cooking. I ended up opening two fish restaurants in London – one in Soho and one in Covent Garden.

Q: After selling your restaurants you're now a consultant for the San Carlo restaurant group. What does that involve?

AZ: I taste recipes and create new dishes. The other day for our new restaurant Cicchetti Covent Garden we tried a new recipe – spaghetti cooked in red wine with a pecorino cheese mousse on top. The sauce was made of pancetta and extra virgin olive oil.

Q: It sounds delicious! What's your most popular dish from the Cicchetti menu?

AZ: So many. Our truffle ravioli is one of our bestsellers. You must try it!

Aldo is chef consultant for the San Carlo Group of restaurants, which recently opened Cicchetti Covent Garden. www.sancarlo.co.uk
Aldo also hosts a radio show on Soho Radio once a fortnight on a Thursday from 2-4pm. For more details visit www.sohoradiolondon.com

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Premium Italian coffee roaster illycaffè has launched a new initiative to give 20 mums the chance to earn money by doing what they love – holding coffee mornings for their friends and family at home, chillaxing and chit-chatting over a cappuccino.

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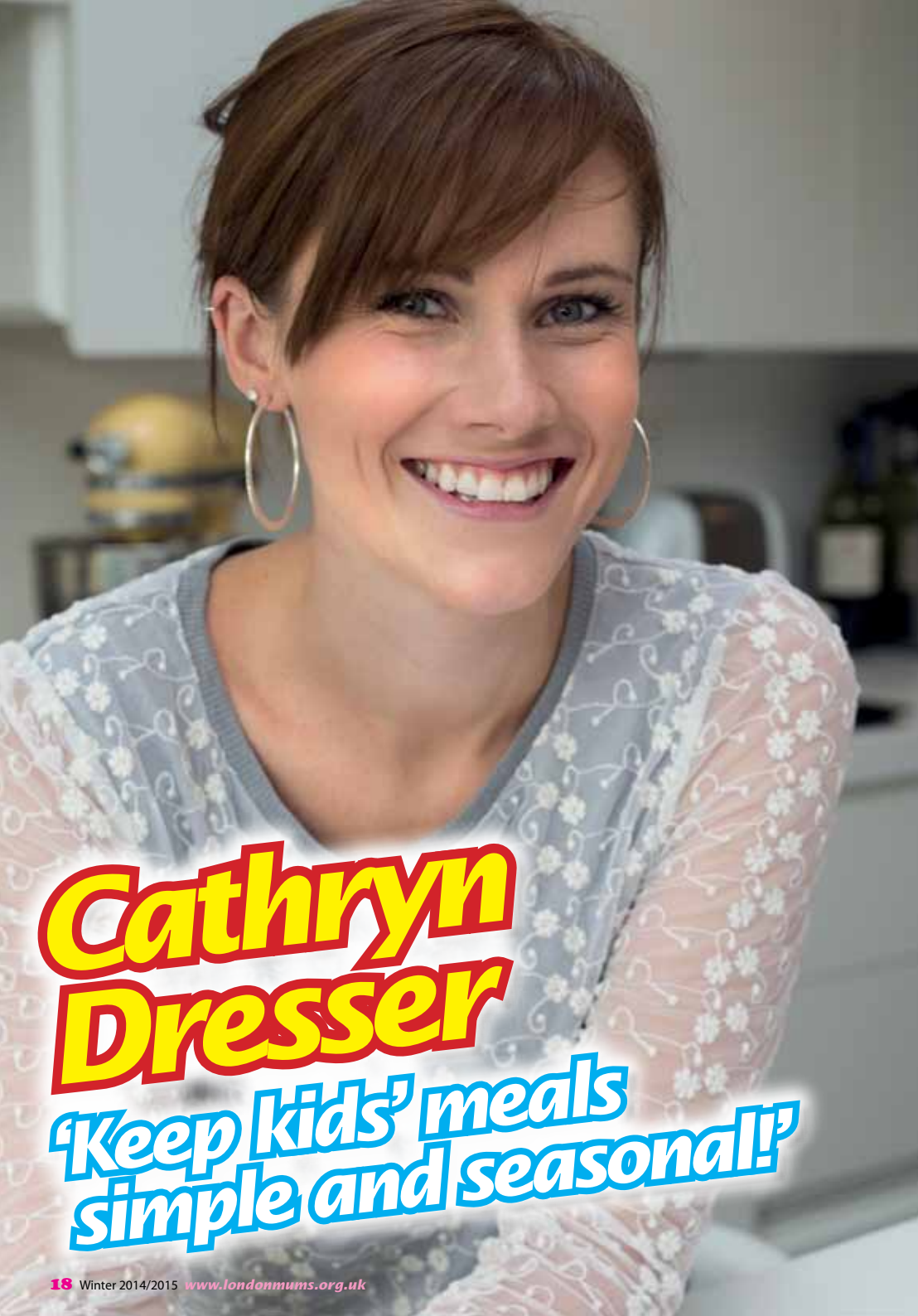
illy will then pick the top 20 to go forward as 'illy Mums', who'll have the chance to choose one of two stylish illy coffee machines. The machine will be delivered to their home address along with FREE illy coffee capsules in time for their first coffee morning in December, where they'll earn commission for every coffee machine they sell!

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Cathryn Dresser

'Keep kids' meals simple and seasonal!'

Cathryn Dresser lives in Sussex with her husband and two young children. A contestant on the third series of THE GREAT BRITISH BAKE OFF in 2012, since the show she has run a successful market stall with fellow contestant Sarah-Jane Willis, had her recipes featured in the SUN magazine and run baking masterclasses at events including the BBC Good Food Show.

Q: Tell us a bit about your participation in The Great British Bake Off... How were you selected? What you liked and what you hated about the show? How has this show changed your life?

CD: I applied for the Great British Bake Off series 2, as I was such a huge fan of the first. I (as expected) heard nothing after submitting the form, and so went on to watch and adore the second series whilst chuckling to myself that I had been crazy enough to have applied! Then I applied again for series 3 anticipating the same outcome as before...but...one day the phone rang and the rest is as they say history! The selection process is a long one with many steps, but whilst there were many stages it really was huge fun. Each time I got a little further through the process I kept expecting it to be the last time I'd be called back, and never in a million years did I think I would actually have made it into the final 12 and onto my favourite show! There was nothing about the process that I didn't love, even the 6am starts and the dreaded judging! It was the most amazing experience of my life (other than having my little people of course)!

Q: You had your children very young. What are the pros and cons of having children at a young age?

CD: I did have my peanuts when I was young, and for me this was perfect. I absolutely love being a young mummy, and my children like it too (apart from when I embarrass them on the playground by signing or dancing –

although I think that is more about a definite case of Peter Pan syndrome than my actual age)! Of course I think it's massively important to truly be an adult before starting a family. I think being a mummy was a big part of the plan laid out for me and I think of how things have panned out since and am amazed at just how blessed I am. I guess if forced to think of a negative; the only thing that I can think of (although I'm not sure how sad I really even feel about it) is that I lost touch with some old friends from school years, as our lives became so drastically different, I had a baby whilst they were off to Uni. But, now I have the most amazing group of friends of all different ages largely met through having my children.

Q: What are your career plans for the future?

CD: I am planning to open a little bakery of my own in the next couple of months, which is both terrifying and exciting in equal measure! Alongside this I would love to continue to do some of the amazing things I have been lucky enough to do so far. I have loved the TV and media side of things, it really is a lot of fun so I would love to continue to be lucky enough to do some more of that...please. A second book would be completely awesome, and if I could in some way go onto to be involved in Bake Off again, that would be the absolute icing on the cake. This sounds like a really greedy wish list of career ideals – and that is what it is I guess! I am honestly so thrilled to have done what I've done already but as S Club 7 once sang "Reach for the stars"!

Q: What is your favourite meal of all times?

CD: Spag Bol' or sandwiches – I could happily eat either of these selections for every meal of every day!

Q: What's your favourite restaurant in London? Or anywhere else?

CD: Oh crumbs, I don't know, too many to choose, but Le Manoir is my unvisited dream restaurant location.

Q: What's your top tips to prepare a yummy and non complicated Christmas Dinner that children can enjoy too?

CD: Tell yourself 'it's just a roast dinner'...keep it simple, do as much in advance as you can and let the children in the kitchen to help you make it, my two love to eat the things they've had a hand in making.

Q: Who would be your favourite dancing partner if you were asked to participate in Strictly Come Dancing?

CD: Anton or Brendan – one of the originals! – My mum would love this Question, and my answer would meet her approval too – we love strictly, almost as much as Bake Off!

Q: Can you give time deprived London Mums some tips to cook easy meals with the kids?

CD: Keep it simple and seasonal. Have a basic supply of easy and filling ingredients in the cupboards like tinned tomatoes, rice, cous-cous etc. also slow cooking is perfect as you can put it on in the morning or overnight and leave it to do its thing. Also a great tip is to cook up a big batch of spaghetti Bol', curry, chilli etc when you have a little more time and freeze some to defrost and eat on a busier day.

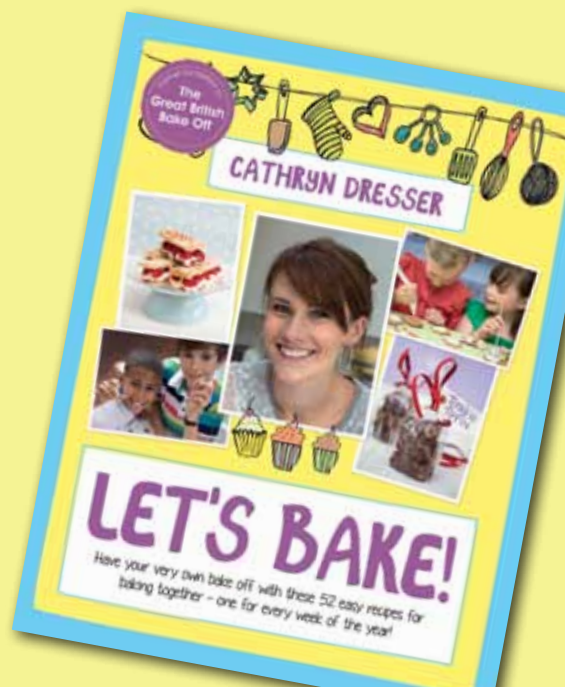
Q: If you were Mayor of London for the day what would you do to inspire young people to eat healthy food and ditch fast food?

CD: I think I would just encourage so much hands-on growing, making and eating of their food. I think letting young people get properly stuck in without worrying about mess or time constraints would be a great introduction into how much fun preparing, cooking and sharing food can be. Perhaps a week off all other school work, devoted to food; visiting producers, tasting days, visits from chefs etc! Who wouldn't love a foodie algebra-free week?!

Q: What is your guilty pleasure?

CD: A double whopper with cheese, extra gherkins but no onion! A VERY guilty pleasure!

Cathryn Dresser's book 'LET'S BAKE' (52 easy recipes – one for every week of the year!) is published by Orion Children's Books



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SUPER MUMS

LINDSAY & SUE

The authors behind Claire Taylor-Smith's series Hattie B, Magical Vet.

Q: Where did the inspiration for your books come from?

Sue: All of our inspiration comes from our children. The quirky things they say or their funny personalities. Hattie B was inspired by Lindsay's daughter Harriet, who has wanted to become a vet from such a young age and would treat all of her soft toys in her imaginary veterinary practice. As she was horse mad, she had toy horses, unicorns and Pegasus, which then raised the question of where do magical creatures go for help if they are poorly? A magical vet, of course! Most of the characters in our stories are based on someone from our family. We feel the familiarity of their personalities makes the stories much easier to write and have a bit of fun with.

Q: How do you think you can teach creativity in the classroom these days?

Lindsay: I believe that creativity is developed by being inspired. If you have an inspirational teacher that is not afraid to reach outside the box, encourage children to do the same by finding out answers for themselves and by asking a range of open questions, children's natural inquisitive minds will flourish and develop their own creative thought processes. When I was a teacher I loved combining subjects across a theme to allow the children to develop skills across the curriculum yet be meaningfully based on the one subject. Another project that gave me wonderful results was setting the children a homework task on a theme of their choice. The children had a curriculum subject each week that they would have to investigate based on their chosen subject. This allowed some of the more disinterested children to engage and the more able children to have free reign to take their research and presentations as far as they wanted to go. It made for a great classroom display with subjects ranging from the Titanic, rabbits, cartoons and Doctor Who!

Q: If you were joint Mayors of London for the day what would you do?

Lindsay & Sue: When we visit London, we do enjoy the trip. However, everything looks so grey. But we absolutely loved the Fabergé Big Egg Hunt and now the new Books About Town storybook benches because they insert a bit of colour and fun to the city. We would set about making London much brighter and livelier!

Q: And if you were joint Queens of Britain for a day what would be your first initiative?

Lindsay & Sue: Britain seems to have become quite a detached country made up of individuals who are frightened to speak or look at anyone in fear of how it will be interpreted. As Queens we would instill an initiative of 'Hi and Smile!' Whether passing in the street or sitting next to someone on the Tube you would have to smile and say hi. It would make us smile as we are happy to talk to anyone and sometimes just a simple 'hi' can lift your spirits.

Read the full interview online at www.londonmumsmagazine.com



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Readers' letters

Our Agony Aunt Dr Ellie Cannon responds to your questions

We are honoured to have Dr Ellie Cannon as our Agony Aunt to answer all your parenting dilemmas for the second time. Dr Cannon is one of the resident medical experts for Channel 4's Health Freaks and is frequently on BBC Breakfast, Daybreak, This Morning, BBC Radio 4 as well as Sky News on Sky Sunrise.

Measles

I have read a lot about the connection between MMR and autism and I am not keen to vaccinate my young children but I have been put under pressure by my GP to get them vaccinated. What should I do? Andrea, Wapping

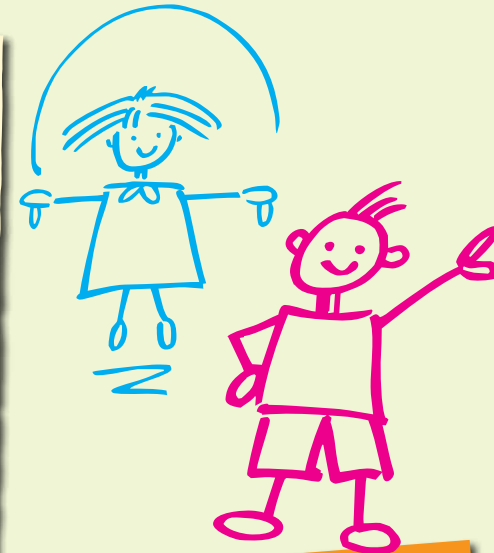
Without a doubt I would vaccinate your children. My children have had all the vaccinations because it is the greatest gift you can give a child, to protect them against life threatening illnesses. The only study that has suggested a link between MMR and autism had to be withdrawn, and it's author is no longer allowed to practise as a doctor. What it showed was that all the children involved had autism and all had had the MMR; it doesn't show that one caused the other. No scientific study has ever proven a link; the most compelling evidence comes from Japan where they don't give the MMR but rates of autism continue to rise. What we do know is that autism symptoms start around 12-18 months just when a child has the MMR – it is this sad coincidence that has allowed the myth of an association to proliferate. We still do not know what causes autism and it is understandable parents look for an answer. That answer is not the MMR. It is also worth remembering that during a measles outbreak as we have just had in Wales, the unvaccinated children are the first to get ill.



SIDS (Sudden infant death syndrome)

I am pregnant and I have read a lot about SIDS. I am terrified to lose my baby by this sudden condition. There's so much on the internet but I want to have your expert's opinion.'
Lisa, Chiswick

This is an excellent question but please don't worry. SIDS is one of those absolutely devastating conditions but it is still rare. About 250 babies a year die from SIDS in the UK, most of whom are under 5 months. The good news is that since the 90s the rates have been going down as we have learnt more about the condition. Firstly create a smoke free home for your baby as we know this helps. The safest way for your baby to sleep is in her own crib or cot, on her back, with feet at the bottom of the cot: "feet-to-foot". Cover her just to her shoulders with a tucked-in blanket or sleeping bag, not loose covers that could cover a baby's face. Babies do not need pillows or duvets in their cot, and if you use bumpers make sure they are thin and tightly secured. Keep the room warm, which would be a temperature that you feel comfortable at, no hotter: a baby should never be sweating or feel hot. Finally your baby should sleep in your room but not in your bed, until at least 6 months. There is some science to suggest that breastfeeding and using a dummy also lower the chances of SIDS.



DR ELLIE CANNON (GP AND AUTHOR'S NEW BOOK KEEP CALM; THE NEW MUM'S MANUAL' (VERMILION) IS AVAILABLE FROM AMAZON.



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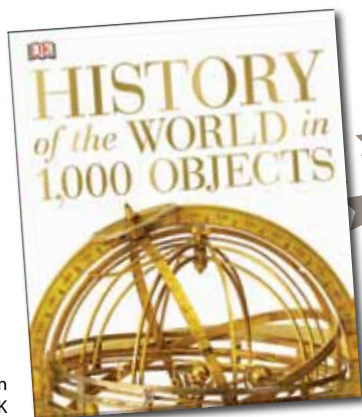
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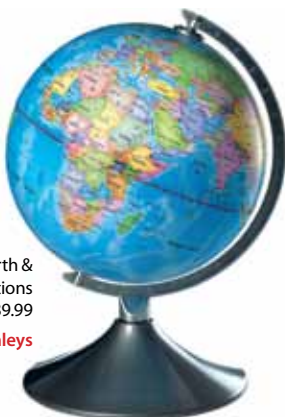


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