

Gourmet Geezer Cookbook Introduction

Thank you so much for buying this book.

The Gourmet Geezers' Cookbook is a collection of recipes for ordinary folk. It's not a glitzy book, but one full of straightforward and tasty recipes made with easy-to-purchase ingredients.

This book contains more than 150 recipes chosen by a bunch of blokes who belong to a self-help group within their local U3A. The University of the Third Age (U3A) is an organisation set up in the UK over 35 years ago. It encourages people in their later years to come together and continue their enjoyment of learning in subjects of interest to them. One of these is now COOKING.

There are over 1,000 U3As across the UK, with hundreds of interest groups and more than 400,000 members nationally.



The Haslemere U3A was founded in 1997 by an imaginative man called Jeff Wise who became its founding Chairman. It was, and still is, headquartered in Haslemere Hall in the market town of Haslemere in Surrey. The hall has a small but well-equipped kitchen and a spacious adjoining annex. These facilities tempted Jeff Wise to start a new group for local men (probably encouraged by their

wives) to pick up some cooking skills. He called the group *Cooking for Men* and was its first group leader. He continued to be a much valued member of the group until he retired from the group in 2016.

What do we do now?

The *Cooking for Men* group meets twice a month and we take it in turn to be 'Cook of the Day.' The task for each session is to devise recipes for a two-course meal, purchase the necessary ingredients, perfect the cooking of it, then bring the recipes to the group. At the meeting, the group prepares and cooks under his direction. We then all enjoy the fruits of our endeavours, washed down with a glass or two of wine, also provided by the Cook of the Day.

The standard of the meals that we prepare has increased considerably over the years, and Jeff Wise shares a laugh with us when he recalls how one of the first sessions was devoted to making Fairy Cakes. We now run a competition for 'Cook of the Year' and at our summer BBQ, with our ladies present, the winning cook is given a certificate for hanging proudly at home.

Friendly banter is rife at every session from the minute we sit down with coffee to be briefed by the Cook of the Day on what we're about to do, until (and especially) when it comes to the post-prandial review of what we've just eaten. When things go wrong during the cooking – and they sometimes do with hilarious results – there's lots of ribbing.

Our fun is not limited to these sessions. Each Christmas and end of the summer 'term' we invite our partners to join us for a party. We not only serve a slap up meal but attempt some entertainment. The Christmas events have included memorable skits inspired well-known TV comedy shows, such as *Dad's Army*, *Allo, Allo!* and *Would I Lie to You?* I confess being the writer of all this nonsense.

But now to the serious stuff: why this book?

About eight years ago I had an idea to photograph the food and memorialise the recipes for the members. I put them onto A4 pages and periodically printed them off for each to keep in their special ring binders. Over the years it has grown into a two-volume compilation of more than 200 recipes.



In the autumn of 2018 we met an energetic American music lawyer called Stacey Haber who now lives in the UK and is very active with a local festival called 'The Haslemere Fringe.' Stacey founded a book publishing company and has herself already published three cookbooks for youngsters. When she was shown our collection of recipes she jumped at the chance to publish it for us.

The search was on for a title for the cookbook. Numerous, sometimes daft, suggestions were made; but we eventually settled on *The Gourmet Geezers' Cookbook*.

We now had an identity and Stacey designed a logo for us which is currently printed on white aprons. You can buy one! At the same time we pondered what we might do with any profit from this venture, and agreed that it should be donated to charity. We decided that it would be a local charity, and we chose *The Hunter Centre*. This is Haslemere's day centre for dementia sufferers and their carers which recently lost its primary source of funding when the Alzheimer's Society withdrew support for its day centres. We are delighted that *The Hunter Centre* has agreed to be our partner charity and you can read about them on the next page.

We are fortunate to have within our group a wine enthusiast – our In-House Sommelier - who has recently started up his own U3A group on Wine Appreciation. He has enhanced this book with a suggested wine accompaniment for each main course recipe, and provided some helpful tips on selection in his *Introduction to the Wines* which follows.

We hope you enjoy using this cookbook as much as we had in creating it. Most of the recipes were home produced or handed down, but some were adapted from the internet and published sources, and we would like to acknowledge these sources with our thanks. While all of these sources were inspirational only and we have adapted them to our abilities, amenities and tastes, we are grateful to the relatives, professionals and influences that have shaped us and our food. You have inspired our group and given us the tools to be better men and greater cooks.

Mike Pugh