

WI LADIES GET SPICY!

Our August meeting of the Woodhouse Eaves WI proved to be educational, informative and well.... just fun.

Following the club's business presented by our Vice-President and Treasurer, Cheryl McGreevy, we had an excellent presentation by Yung Tsang, our Secretary on our new and up-to-date WI Woodhouse Eaves website, very useful for some of us who are perhaps not quite as adept as we should be at accessing online information. There is also a locally dedicated Facebook page.

The main event of the evening was a presentation by Leicester based cookery teacher, Mrs Bhanu Mistry on Indian herbs, spices and pulses used in both Indian and Asian cuisine as well as medicinal purposes.

Mrs Mistry brought along a fabulous array of spices and herbs which she carefully went through explaining their uses and how they were incorporated into particular dishes. Starting with perhaps the most well-known spice, chilies, she had an assortment with varying 'strengths', explaining that if you preferred a less 'lethal' strength it was best to remove the white membrane as well as all the seeds contained within! An interesting fact was that there are over a hundred varieties grown in the UK alone but to our amazement, over a thousand world-wide! Well, the mildest turns out to be paprika. Very wisely, she had brought just four varieties along for our evening demonstration.

As she went through the many spices on her display table, she gave us some good tips for both using and storing them, for example when you have too much chopped garlic it can be frozen to avoid waste.

There were useful health tips in her presentation:

- garlic can help to lower cholesterol
- ginger is good for coughs and nausea
- turmeric, which contains curcumin, is well-known for reducing the pain and discomfort of osteoarthritis.

There were many familiar spices, some of which are used in the making of garam masala: cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg, sesame and black and white peppers, but there were also ones most of us had not even heard of such as asafoetida, a tree-root used for 'fixing' tastes in many dishes. Mustard seeds, a more familiar spice, are commonly used tempering/ flavouring both vegetable as well as dishes made from pulses.



Pulses, such as mung beans and Dahl are widely used in Asian cookery and orid is used in the making of flour for poppadoms whilst chickpeas are a vital ingredient in garam flour which, incidentally, is good for those who are gluten intolerant.

Before concluding her talk there were many questions from the WI members including how long spices and herbs should be stored to maintain freshness and the best way to use them for medicinal benefits.

Finally, the part everyone had been looking forward to, the tasting session! Mrs Mistry had brought along a generous selection of savoury biscuits, nibbles and Indian 'canapés' to try which were, of course, delicious.

The evening was a great success.



The next Woodhouse Eaves WI meeting will be on Wednesday, September 18th at 7.30pm in the village hall.

Deirdre Thomas

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