



Food blogger MiMi Aye at the launch of the Grazing Asia supper club

Hot pots

Underground supper clubs are in vogue among food lovers. Meet the talented amateur chefs who are bringing them to life

Words: Rupa Sudra Photographs: Paul Winch-Furness

It's a late summer's evening and an enticing aroma wafts from a South London kitchen. Selina Periampillai, assisted by her mother, is cooking up a Mauritian feast. But it's not for family or friends – this meal is for a group of complete strangers.

Periampillai is part of a growing number of home cooks who regularly open up their kitchens to the public, sharing their culinary skills in exchange for a small fee – usually around £40 a head. “People want to try something different and have unique experiences, which is exactly what dining at someone’s house is,” she explains.

So why have supper clubs suddenly become so popular? One theory is that restaurant-goers’ wallets have been hit hard by the recession and, as a result, they are looking for more affordable ways to eat out. Another idea is that supper clubs provide a more interactive and social experience. A case in point can be found at Berkeley’s Royal Arsenal Riverside development in South-East London, where →



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“Expect mismatched crockery and cutlery and a chaotic influx of dishes”

residents have started their own supper club to get to know each other over good home-cooked food.

Food writer Sabrina Ghayour believes the trend has emerged because of the increasing visibility of foodie culture. “We are consumed by the idea of being chefs and cooking for people through the influence of television and celebrity chefs,” she says. “Supper clubs are easily accessible and can be started at home. People can showcase the cuisine of their own cultures, which is less known to a mainstream audience.”

Periampillai’s supper club began in March 2012, and has since received a lot of interest – no doubt partly due to fellow Mauritian Shelina Permalloo’s 2012 *MasterChef* win. She says: “I want more people to come and experience home-cooked Mauritian food, especially now it’s been catapulted to the forefront of people’s minds.”

Lisa Burey is new on the supper club scene and her debut event – ‘Lisa’s Jamaican Kitchen’ – was a huge success. She

says: “People like learning about different cultures and food is a good carriage for that. I tend to give a short introduction about the history of each dish and when and how they are served back home.”

As well as highlighting lesser-known cuisines, supper clubs also offer an array of experiences not available in a restaurant setting. “The food is incredibly important,” says Ghayour, “not just in variety, but in taste, temperature and consistency. But it’s also about the overall vibe, really. The crowd, the personal touches, and the conversations.”

Burey sums it up well: “Supper clubs offer the chance to try authentic food while having an evening out at a minimal cost and meet like-minded foodies.” ☺

Visit www.edibleexperiences.com for more information on established and new supper clubs. Find out more about Royal Arsenal Riverside at www.royalarsenal.co.uk



Table manners

Get the best out of your supper club experience

Remember that supper clubs are not restaurants. “Expect mismatched chairs, crockery and cutlery,” says food writer Sabrina Ghayour.

• Most supper clubs operate a ‘bring your own wine’ policy, so it’s worth stocking up on a bottle or two.

• While the pressure may be on the host, help them out by arriving on time.

• Make sure you inform your host of any dietary requirements in advance.

Leigh and Shuwen run Two Hungry Girls (above), Lisa Burey heads up ‘Jamaican Kitchen’ (below), and Goz hosts PlusSixFive (left)

