

# Cooking up a storm at Denman!

**Activity experiences are becoming increasingly popular and are a rewarding way to spend time with your group. Editor, Rebecca McWattie, went in search of some expert baking advice from the WI Cookery School...**

**A**s the centenary celebrations of the Women's Institute take off right across the UK, I decided to explore the true ethos of this extraordinary organisation with a trip to Denman, in the heart of the Oxfordshire countryside. Formally established in 1948, and named after the first chairwoman of the WI federation, Lady Denman, the college continues to carry forth the Women's Institute core value of empowering

individuals through knowledge.

Students attending the college do not have to be members of the WI, and it's also great to see that gentlemen are very much encouraged to visit. From relaxing residential breaks to day courses on a wide range of subjects including arts, crafts, music, history, sport and technology, Denman has gained a reputation for providing all visitors with a warm welcome and the opportunity to not only develop new skills but make friends and meet those with similar interests.

On arrival all course attendees were welcomed with coffee and pastries in the main college building, giving us an opportunity to meet before being shown to the Cookery School, a specially designed building nestled in the beautiful grounds and equipped with the latest modern appliances and kitchenware. Our course tutor, Kelly Mauger, is a trained pastry chef and is now a permanent course tutor at Denman. Not only is she brilliant fun, she answered any questions and effortlessly demonstrated the art of

theWI  
INSPIRING WOMEN

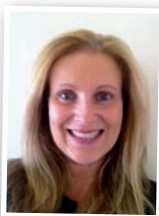


colourful French macarons and red velvet cupcakes to perfection!

Best of all, Kelly's assistant kindly prepared and weighed out all the ingredients, supplied by Waitrose, so that we could spend more time cooking. We were all eager to start and thankfully Kelly kept circulating the room in order to lend a hand and offer assistance. Despite being a keen baker, wrestling with a piping bag isn't my forté and I certainly couldn't have managed such a great result without Kelly's expert help. After lunch in the main house we were given a masterclass in decorating and ended up with



tart, profiteroles, éclairs and meringues. I felt like I was in an episode of *The Great British Bake off* with 12 students/contestants! My family and friends couldn't believe I'd baked the goodies myself, as it was a first attempt. My second course was 'Cupcakes and Macarons' and I have already baked another batch of Red Velvet cupcakes, applauded by my tasters!"



extremely professional-looking treats to take home.

Afterwards, I asked a fellow course attendee, Sarah Burridge, if she had enjoyed the experience: "I've been a member of Cowes WI since 2010 and decided to book 2 day courses, both run by tutor Kelly Mauger, who was wonderful, young, fun, and had lots of patience! You even get to keep your recipe ingredient book to take home with you for future reference. The first course I attended was 'French Patisserie', which involved baking a traditional lemon



Denman offers a wide range of residential courses lasting between one and four nights, plus Day Schools, like the Cupcake and Macaron course, and WI Day Visits, perfect for groups and including a two-course lunch with wine, a full guided tour and followed by a delicious cream tea. The WI Taste of Denman includes all this along with a cookery demonstration taking place in the award-winning Cookery School. Designer Days allow you to tailor your own group day out, including a range of activities and demonstrations from cookery and floristry to aromatherapy, knitting or patchwork.



Contact the Group Booking Co-ordinator:  
 01865 391991 [www.denman.org.uk](http://www.denman.org.uk)