

Dining Around Sydney Magazine

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## OUR OBSESSION WITH COOKING – IT’S NO LONGER JUST A SPECTATOR SPORT

Not so long ago it was a renovation obsession. If you needed to “sharpen up” the look of your kitchen, bathroom, garden or back deck there was a television show on how to do it. The latest set of skills that we think are a little blunt however, are not the ones in the shed. It seems that the “do it yourself” flavour of the month is the “master of the home” learning how to be a “master chef”, or at least be able to whip up a yummy meal.

Perhaps it’s the substantial number of cooking shows that are appearing on our screens, or maybe people are becoming increasingly curious about how they can stay home and prepare more appetising meals. Whatever the reason, it seems to have translated into an eruption of interest in people attending cooking classes around the country.

Maria Benardis, chef and owner of Sydney’s Greekalicious cooking has certainly noticed a difference. *“I’ve observed an increase in people enrolling to do cooking classes. They’re taking an interest in what they eat and rediscovering the enjoyment of cooking and sharing food with friends and family. We’re all shifting towards getting back to the basics and finding love in simplicity”* Ms Benardis said.

Choose any cuisine you like and there’s bound to be a class to introduce you to the fundamentals of how to prepare the signature dishes. If seafood, BBQ, vegetarian or organic food is your passion, you’ll be well catered for, or if you have a sweet tooth you’ll be tempted by chocolate classes that will have you bringing your own handmade chocolates home. Many classes are available as a one-off, which may suit you down to the ground. Or if you are looking for a little more depth, others can be purchased as a series of classes that operate over a period of weeks.

Cooking classes are becoming increasingly popular as a gift for birthdays or to say “thank you” to someone, and they won’t break the bank in the process with many coming in with a price tag not much above \$100 per person. They’re also proving to be all the rage as a great way for a bunch of friends to spend time together and have a lot of fun. Some cooking schools offer exclusive use of their venue for you and your group of friends, and will tailor the class to your specific requirements.

Check out the abundance of [cooking classes](#) available for purchase online by logging on to dining and lifestyle experience gift certificate site [Best Gift Certificates](#). It is the only online gift certificate website in Australia dedicated to restaurants, wine, food and the hospitality industry, combined with lifestyle experiences.

Best Gift Certificates is operated by hospitality media outfit de GROOTS Media. de GROOTS is well established in the restaurants arena with sister website [Best Restaurants of Australia](#) having provided up-to-date information about what’s what and what’s new in restaurants for more than ten years. Managing Director Maureen de Groot commented that the internet is an

excellent means for people to find out about the cooking classes available in their area. She has noticed a dramatic increase in traffic on her company's websites from people searching for cooking schools since Channel Ten's MasterChef program went to air. *"The level of interest has been phenomenal,"* Ms de Groot said. *"We've been swamped with enquiries from both men and women who want to brush up on their culinary skills. People have become very well informed about what they're eating and want good meals not only when dining out but at home as well."*

Gift certificates for cooking classes can be searched for by location on [Best Gift Certificates](#) and can be delivered to the recipient complete with a personalised message immediately by email, saving time and hassle. Or if the purchaser prefers, the certificate can be sent by mail to any location within Australia.

If the person being purchased for has quite specific taste, the *Universal Gift Certificate* takes away all the guesswork. The purchaser simply chooses the amount they want to spend (\$25 to \$500), and when the gift certificate is received the recipient visits [www.bestgiftcertificates.com.au](http://www.bestgiftcertificates.com.au), redeems the gift certificate into an online account and then starts shopping for a lifestyle or dining experience of their choice.

Further details can be found by visiting [Best Gift Certificates](#) or enquiries can be emailed to [admin@bestgiftcertificates.com.au](mailto:admin@bestgiftcertificates.com.au) .

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### **About de Groots Media**

de Groots Media is a leading and long-established supplier of quality restaurant and hospitality information throughout Australia. The company hosts a number of websites including Best Restaurants, Best Venues, Best Clubs and Best Gift Certificates. de Groots Media also publishes Dining Around Sydney, a complimentary travel magazine delivered to 5-star hotels, concierges and high-end corporations in Sydney.

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