



Easter funday

How Lesley Waters' cookery workshop

On a glorious spring morning, 12 young cooks gather round celebrity chef Lesley Waters in the sun-filled garden room of her beautiful Dorset home.

She's about to take them on a whirlwind culinary adventure, whipping up Easter treats worthy of *Ready, Steady, Cook*'s finest.

Lesley may be one of television's most vivacious chefs, appearing regularly on both BBC and ITV cookery shows, but she admits that her first love is teaching – she was senior lecturer at Leith's School of Food and Wine for several years.

It's no surprise, then, that the occasional kids' cookery mornings she runs from her 18th century home in Evershot – which she shares with her photographer husband Tim and their two children – are something close to her heart.

Since her son Isaac was born six years ago, Lesley has become passionate about creating healthy food for, and with, kids – and making it fun. She's a great supporter of Focus on Food, a campaign to promote hands-on cooking in schools, and has travelled throughout the country inspiring youngsters to cook. Currently

working on a children's picture book centred around a magic kitchen, her philosophy is simple. "For kids," she says, "cooking is the best game in the world. It's about having fun and making a mess – and it gets them interested in food."

She seems to know how to do it. The 12 mini-chefs gathered in her bright Victorian garden room range from a pair of three-year-olds – one of whom is her daughter Scout – through to 10-year-old Josh. Their mums (and one brave dad), on hand with kitchen roll, are treated to a kitchen drama starring a celebrity chef who's appeared on *Can't Cook, Won't Cook*, *This Morning*, *Kids in the Kitchen* and, of course, *Ready, Steady, Cook*.

From the moment the children don their aprons and wash their hands, they're swept along on Lesley's wave of enthusiasm.

They are split into groups. The younger ones make hot cross buns. Lola, 4, and Adam, 3, have a good pummel, kneading in sultanas and raisins. To them, it's an edible game of Play-Doh.

The older ones are about to make pasta –

something many adults have never attempted – while the little ones pipe paste through paper cones on to the buns they've made. Lesley dances about, dishing out encouragement. There's more than a hint of theatricality about Lesley – from her zany clothes to the drama she brings to cookery. Even the house seems made for her showbiz-style approach – its former owners were singer/actress Toyah Willcox and her musician husband Robert Fripp.

Six-year-old Thomas's dad, Pete, reminds the little ones they've forgotten to paint their buns, which continue to expand even as the children glaze them. "It's the yeast," explains Isaac.

A delicious smell is coming from the kitchen – it's the hot cross buns baking in the Aga. With her fast, modern approach, Lesley isn't a natural Aga lass. "I need a Mary Berry course," she laughs, referring to the doyenne of Aga cooking. "So far, I've learnt how to make good toast and dry my knickers in it!"

Back in the garden room, the chefs are feeding their dough through pasta machines over and over again until they resemble giant tongues