



Sophie takes us into her kitchen

By Nick Young

East Finchley's foodie credentials have been on the rise recently, with local resident Emma Spitzer doing well on the BBC TV cookery show *MasterChef* earlier in the year.



Last year's winner of the celebrity edition, actor Sophie Thompson, has lived in N2 with her family for 14 "very happy" years and has now brought out her first cookery book, *My Family Kitchen*. "It's a love song really to my family and friends," she told *THE ARCHER*. "It's made me enjoy cooking again."

The *MasterChef* challenge

Cooking has been part of Sophie's life from an early age. "I did it with my toys," she said, "even on an old vintage toy stove that ran on meths: health and safety nightmare! My grannies, Uncle James and mum [actress Phyllida Law] influenced me most."

MasterChef, though, was a big challenge. "The thing that prompted me to take part... was to surprise myself. It was all fantastically challenging. I think doing things to such rigorous time restraints was the hardest."

What does Sophie like about East Finchley? "So many

things," she said when *THE ARCHER* asked her this question. "All our wonderful local independent shops: Tony's Continental, Amici, Scotts the fishmongers, Black Gull Books, Majjos, Cherry Tree Gifts, the new Aliya J, Kokos, Campbell & Syme our very own coffee roasters, to name but a few."

TV and theatre

As well as seeing her book published, Sophie has recently been in Huddersfield filming *Jericho*, an eight-part costume drama for ITV in which she plays a publican. "It's a sort of English western," she explained. "And now I have started re-rehearsals for a production of *Guys and Dolls* I was involved with last year in Chichester. We are bringing it to town at the Savoy theatre, through Christmas and into next spring."

My Family Kitchen is on sale locally in Black Gull Books and in Tony's Continental.



Get set for Christmas Festival 2015

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The ever popular dog show is scheduled for 11.30am with this year's theme being 'The Most Christmassy Dog'. It will take place at the Lincoln Road festival stage site, where the information tent is also situated.

On-stage activities begin at 12 noon and continue to 5pm with musical activities covering singing, dancing and instrumentals reflecting the Christmas music and carols being heard on the streets.

Father Christmas will be

there with his sleigh. Children will be able to pet his real-life reindeer and make Christmas tree decorations. A new Christmas tree will be planted at Budgens corner.

There will be story-telling sessions for the under-sevens in the foyer of the Finchley Youth Theatre and the Phoenix Cinema will be holding special events for youngsters. Fit people can participate in Santa's Fun Run and anyone can enter the Great East Finchley Christmas Bake-Off, with individual mince pies being tasted by a mystery judge.

The organisers are hoping for a strong showing of local traders at the festival and welcome any enquiries about this, as well as from anyone wanting to volunteer their help (stewards are needed on the day) or to make some sort of contribution or sponsorship.

Email eastfinchleyfestival@gmail.com for any information, offer or suggestion. Details will also be available on Twitter @N2Festival and East Finchley Festival on Facebook, and keep your eyes open for posters giving more details.

Could you be a star baker?

Everyone is invited to enter the Great East Finchley Christmas Bake-Off competition which this year is setting out to find the best mince pie maker.

Entries for the competition (one per person) should be brought to the information tent by the stage on Lincoln Road from 10am onwards on the day of the festival (Saturday 5 December).

Place your pie on a paper plate with the following information written on the back: your name, age (if under 18) and phone number; if the pie is vegetarian, non-vegetarian or contains nuts.

Prizes will be awarded for the best one made by a grown up and by a non-grown up. The decision by the surprise judge is final!

Festival specials for all ages

East Finchley Altogether Better (EFAB) are working in partnership with the Christmas Festival team to ensure there is something for everyone at the East Finchley Christmas Festival on Saturday 5 December.

Oakdale Pharmacy on the High Road, and possibly others, will be offering free health, or 'elf' checks, throughout the day. Drop in to get advice on healthy living including diet, aids for daily living, smoking cessation, and blood pressure monitoring.

Some of the restaurants who regularly offer the EFAB Silver Service, a £5 menu deal for over 60s and their guest on Tuesdays, will be offering the deal on the day of the festival. They are the New Local Café (4-10pm), Pelican Fish bar (9am-2pm and 6pm-9pm), the Phoenix Cinema café (12-5pm) and Seasons café (11am-9pm).

Christmas classic

The Phoenix Cinema will also be showing a free screening of *White Christmas* for those over 60 who can bring up to two guests of any age, such as friends, family and carers, on the day. The screening, starting at 10am, will also be 'Dementia Friendly', with brighter lighting, quieter sound and a break in the middle of the film for a sing along and comfort break. Free popcorn is also available, and of course you can enjoy the Silver Service lunch deal there afterwards! Contact Phoenix Cinema on 020 8444 6789 for more details.

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