



Winter warmers bubble with the feelgood factor

East Finchley residents Karen Mattison and Cathy Halstead are the CEO and Marketing Manager of Cook for Good, a social enterprise based on a housing estate near Kings Cross. Here they explain how they bring businesses and communities together through food, and how their new cookbook, *Soup for Good*, is helping fund their work.

As the weather gets colder, many of us reach for a bowl of soup to warm our spirits, as well as our stomachs. But at Cook for Good, soup is more than just a meal; it's become a bit of an obsession for us and the community we serve.

We've been working on the Priory Green Estate near Kings Cross since 2021, starting by turning a disused laundry into a community pantry, led by local volunteers, where members pay £3.50 a week to choose a basket of surplus food worth around £35.

Then a year later, we transformed a derelict café into a community kitchen, where we invited residents aged between five and 85 to take part in free cooking classes and courses, and train local men and women to access jobs in catering and hospitality.

Much of this work is funded by corporate teambuilding events but this autumn we've also launched a fundraising cookbook, *Soup for Good*.

Why soup?

So why did we choose to write about soup? Well, our obsession started one cold winter's day in 2022, when Karen brought in a flask of homemade soup and offered some to our volunteer Mary. She enjoyed it so much that Karen took home

some wonky leftover carrots and made enough carrot soup to share with all the volunteers the following week.

Since then, we have served soup to our members every week, often using traditional recipes from our members' and volunteers' countries and cultures. And as our list of favourites grew, we saw a way to share the story of the soups we love, and the community who have become like family, with a wider audience.

Famous contributors

The result is *Soup for Good*; a celebration of the power of a simple meal to bring people together, described by American actor Stanley Tucci as "The only [soup] book you'll ever need". It's packed with recipes for 50 soups and 24 no-stress breads and toppings, including donated recipes from Nigella Lawson, Ed Balls and Gordon Brown. It also includes personal stories from some of our community members.

All the profits are being invested back into our community work, so as well as being a gorgeous addition to your own bookshelves, it would make a perfect, feelgood gift. It's available from Amazon right now for £23, and you can also pick up a discounted copy on the High Road in Tony's Continental and UOE for £20.



Soup-er: Karen Mattison and Cathy Halstead with the new cookbook that will support their Cook for Good enterprise

Loved-by-all Aromatic Lentil Soup

Try this recipe for yourself from the *Soup for Good* cookbook. The team say it's warming and nourishing and packed full of protein and spices. The taste is creamy with the chilli and mustard seeds adding a gentle kick.

Ingredients:

1 onion
2 mild red chillies
1 tomato
200g red lentils
2 garlic cloves
A small thumb of ginger
2 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp black mustard seeds
1 tsp Baharat or Lebanese 7-spice
Half tsp ground turmeric
1 litre vegetable stock
1 x 400ml tin coconut milk
1 lemon
Salt and pepper



Easy and warming: Aromatic lentil soup

Method:

Finely chop the onion. Deseed and finely chop the chillies. Dice the tomato into small cubes. Wash and drain the lentils. Peel and finely grate the garlic and the ginger to make a paste.

Set a large saucepan or shallow casserole pan on a medium heat. Coat with a thin layer of the oil. Add the mustard seeds and fry for 2 minutes until they start to pop. Stir in the onion, garlic, ginger, chillies, Baharat/7-spice, and turmeric. Sauté until the onion begins to turn light brown.

Add in the diced tomato and sauté until they soften. Add the lentils, coconut milk, vegetable stock, and a good pinch of salt and simmer over a medium heat for 20–25 minutes until thickened and the lentils are cooked. Add the juice from the lemon, starting with the juice of half and then adding more to taste. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

To serve, either blend the soup or leave it as it is for more texture. Garnish with your choice of tasty toppings.



Ideal gifts: The indoor Courtyard Market at The Engine Rooms

Winter makers' markets

More than 40 local creatives will be taking part in The Courtyard markets in East Finchley on the run up to Christmas, selling art, prints, cards, jewellery, textiles, ceramics, homewares and more.

Running alongside the regular Farmers' Market, the first makers' event takes place indoors at the Engine Rooms 82-92 Great North Road, N2, on Sunday 24 November from 10am to 2pm. There will be mulled wine, hot food, live music and a children's craft table. Entry is free.

Christmas markets at The Bald Faced Stag

Two more Christmas markets follow on Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 December at the Bald Faced Stag in the High Road, N2, the first coinciding with the switching on of the East Finchley Christmas lights.

Organised by East Finchley-based social enterprise, Dirthouse, each market day will offer a different selection of local makers, food and live music. Entry is free. For more information, visit dirthouse.co.uk/events.

Memories of loved ones

North London Hospice's annual event in memory of loved ones, **Light Up A Life**, will take place at 47 Woodside Avenue, London N12 8TT, on Sunday 24 November from 4.30pm, with the ceremony beginning at 5pm.

"Light Up A Life is a time to reflect on the cherished moments we shared and find strength by coming together to experience the compassion, companionship and community of the hospice with people who have had similar experiences of losing loved ones," says the hospice team.

Refreshments, including mince pies, doughnuts and mulled wine will be available at the event, which is a vital fundraiser for the charity's care services. If you would like to attend, with or without making a donation, visit the 'Support Us' pages at <https://northlondonhospice.org>



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