

# Can an EXPERT HELP ME?

We sent three women in search of very different solutions to experts to see if they could solve their problems. Siân Merrylees hears what happened next ...



## THE KITCHEN COACH

“Help, I’m stuck in a cooking rut!”

**LISA GERSHON, 48, a tennis tutor, lives in West Hampstead, London, with her husband and two sons, Louis, 14, and Noah, 12.**

**OUR EXPERT** Justine Kanter, founder of The Kitchen Coach, visited her home ([kitchencoach.biz](http://kitchencoach.biz)).

**LISA’S DILEMMA** I was fed up with standing in the supermarket waiting for the idea of a meal to jump out at me. I would grab anything on special offer, then usually waste most of it. I just ended up making the same old thing, spaghetti Bolognese, roast chicken and so on.

### OUR EXPERT SAYS

When you have to cook daily for the family, it’s easy to get stuck in a rut, and enjoyment of cooking goes out the window. However, investing just ten minutes at the start of the week to plan four meals ahead will make a huge difference. If Lisa wants to order online, doing this at the same time is ideal. Either way, with four meals planned she won’t end up buying the same things, and will save food and money too. If the family eats out at the last minute, she can just shunt a meal forward. On nights when everyone’s eating at different times, Lisa should choose a dish that reheats well, such as oven-baked jerk chicken. **Easy steps** It sounds obvious but washing up as you go really saves

time. Also, prep everything before cooking. Better still, and this requires effort, prepare the night before.

**LISA’S VERDICT** I’m a working mum so I’m used to juggling work and after-school activities, but had never given the same organisation to meals. Although it sounds simple, having a meal schedule ahead of shopping made such a difference. I save money as I use everything I buy now, and I don’t waste time dawdling in supermarket aisles. Justine also gave

“A meal schedule made such a difference. I save money and use everything I buy”

me new recipe ideas for an easy fish pie and spare ribs, where you just marinate the ribs in soya, sherry, garlic and ginger, and leave for days. The longer you leave it, the tastier it is.

The boys were so impressed that they asked to have a session with Justine too, who helped them master a dish each. So now when I want a break Louis cooks fajitas or Noah will make teriyaki chicken skewers. Seeing what is involved has made them much more appreciative, and mealtimes have become much less frenetic and more enjoyable.

**The essentials** Justine also showed me a real basic skill – how to chop an onion properly. Gliding the knife when you chop makes it taste sweeter, while too much pressure bruises the onion and makes it taste bitter. She also showed me how to joint a chicken so that it cooks evenly.

## 3 KITCHEN TIME SAVERS

- ✦ **THE NIGHT BEFORE** Prepare everything and keep in fridge so you can start cooking when you get in. An effort, yes, but it pays off.
- ✦ **EVERY SESSION** Sharpen knives for

- three seconds each time you use them.
- ✦ **ONCE A WEEK** Check storecupboard and fridge basics. It’s infuriating to run out of olive oil but have three types of vinegar.



Justine (left) taught Lisa some easy family meals

## WAYS TO CUT FOOD WASTE

- ✦ **RESCUE OLD VEGETABLES** Slow-roast with garlic, herbs, 1tsp of sugar and a glug of olive oil for 2 hours at 100C.
- ✦ **PROTECT MEAT AND FISH** They won’t last in plastic, so unwrap and cover loosely with clingfilm to allow airflow.
- ✦ **EXTEND THE LIFE OF HERBS** Wrap in doubled-up kitchen roll. Dunk in water, then return to the fridge. Re-wet daily.
- ✦ **KEEP EGGS FRESHER LONGER** Store them so they are pointing downwards.

## ASIAN ESSENTIALS

Keep your cupboard stocked for a fast stir-fry and more – just add vegetables and meat or prawns.

**You need** Thai fish sauce, oyster sauce, light and dark soy sauces, sweet chilli sauce, palm sugar, honey, garlic and groundnut oil. Keep ginger in the freezer; limes in the fridge. >>

