



Swap shop for the growing season

Gardeners brought along their spare plants and seeds, and took away cuttings in return during the annual Seed and Plant Swap organised by the East Finchley Community Trust in mid-April. There was a brisk trade in all things green, although no money changed hands, for two hours at Martin Primary School.

Friends of Cherry Tree Wood get busy

By Debbie Linton

East Finchley charity Friends of Cherry Tree Wood is enjoying a new lease of life. Last month they had a very positive meeting with the Greenspaces Department of Barnet Council. Subjects discussed included liaising more effectively with the council over concerns such as graffiti, litter and security.

A new woodland management plan was also discussed, as were some short term conservation projects such as coppicing to help rejuvenate the woodland. There are also plans for the charity to liaise more effectively with other very successful Friends groups in the area.

Friends of Cherry Tree Wood are taking a stall at the East Finchley Festival on 21 June. This is an opportunity to inform them about your ideas, concerns and views. Let them know if you can help with

conservation work, tell them about the types of events you would like them to hold, and help them identify any recreational facilities that could be improved.

They would welcome new members or committee members who wish to support the charity and especially those who see this as an opportunity to make a difference to our local neighbourhood. You can visit the website at www.cherrytreewood.co.uk or get in touch at info@cherrytreewood.co.uk

Shop assistance

Doing a food shop can be a difficult task if you are unable to get out and about easily or carry heavy bags home.

East Finchley Altogether Better (EFAB) is now recruiting for its new shopping service, starting this month. Shoppers will be matched with those who either need a hand to get to the shops, or would like their shopping done for them and unpacked at home.

Shoppers will be fully checked and supported whilst taking part in the service. If you can help out once a week, or need help with your shopping, contact Lisa Smith at EFAB on 07909 998453.

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Emma stands the heat in the Masterchef kitchen

Millions of viewers last month watched Emma Spitzer battle through to the final of TV's toughest cooking challenge, Masterchef. Emma, of Shakespeare Gardens, N2, is managing director of a luxury travel business and married with four young daughters. We asked how she coped with the stress of the competition and those cutting remarks from judges Gregg Wallace and John Torode.

THE ARCHER: Emma, what made you put your name down for Masterchef?

Emma: I wanted to follow a career in food, if I was good enough. It's the most intense thing I've ever done. I had no idea what I was in for. If I had I don't think I would have entered. I've watched it for 10 years but you have no idea how tough it is: the constant state of nerves, the fear of putting yourself on national television to be scrutinised. It's refreshing (but terrifying) that the judges are so brutally honest, unlike friends and family who are usually nice to me when I feed them.

And how did you do?

I made it to the final and I was runner-up. But that's not the end of it. I've been overwhelmed by the level of interest in my style of modern, Middle Eastern and North African cooking and I'd love to do a book. I really want to cook for people. I'm looking for venues to do pop-ups and have been approached to do private dining for people.

What was filming like?

I started filming my first heat in November last year and it went through to January. There was constant preparation and practice to be ready for the next round. I gave myself three days off for Christmas, but even then I was still cooking.

What kind of reaction did you get from being on the show?

What I found lovely about East Finchley is that there's such a community spirit. I had so much support wherever I went, in cafes or getting on the tube. People recognised



Chef special: Emma Spitzer.

me and were so pleased I was doing well.

Have you always liked cooking?

I've been cooking for about 25 years; I started young! I wasn't very well behaved in school but Home Economics was one lesson I never skipped. I really looked forward to it and would even say I was teacher's

pet. I loved taking in a bag of ingredients and coming out with a dish of something; it was very satisfying.

Finally, what would be your dish to impress?

That would be spice-rubbed beef short ribs with a Persian rice dish called chelow, followed by sticky toffee pudding and vanilla ice cream.

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