Girls' night in

REBECCA CORBALLY discovers a great way to entertain food-loving friends

The girls talk to Thierry Daugeron in Rebecca's kitchen about the evening's menu.
Below left: Tiffany Ross watches Thierry at work while Charlotte Burrows (right) gets stuck in.

A GROUP OF women stand in my kitchen with long elegant flutes brimming with pink bubbly Prosecco. We are sophisticated in dress, charming in demeanour, witty in humour and ever-so-slightly hungry, for ladies anyway. This is where the very French and very enthusiastic Thierry Daugeron comes in.

He swoops into your house a mad blur of cheek-kissing, roses, wicker and cooking implements stacked in crates. He spins around opening cupboards and drawers familiarising himself with your kitchen while you disappear upstairs to have a relaxing bath. This is how to do it, get the chef to come to you. Entertain yourself and your friends by having a cookery demo in your very own kitchen and eating the three courses as the night progresses washed down with a Fleurie of course – it's a girl's night in after all.

Thierry is decked out in full bright green chef regalia and we join him in towering crisp white chef hats and long stiff white cotton aprons. Some admit to already cooking a lot, for children, husbands and themselves while the two others make capes out of their aprons and admit to, erm, not. You have to work for your dinner, but this is fun – it's creative, imaginative, interactive and your learn a bit here and there.

Thierry tells us all a little about how our evening will unfold and what we are to expect. It's not complicated cookery; it's simple clean cooking using the things you would normally find in an everyday fridge. A little dash of this and a little bit of that transforms simple ketchup into a punchy colourful tomato dip for an ordinary bag of crisps. Dill chopped at the speed of sound is mixed gently with crème freche and balsamic vinegar and creates a light fresh dip to scoop up with a big beetroot crisp.

We nibble our creations and sip our bubbles while he shows us how to jazz up some boring nuts to go with drinks. You mix them up, drizzle olive oil and sprinkle generously with spices, either pre-mixed spice from a posh deli or a lethal concoction of whatever is in your cupboard, depending on how much Prosecco you've consumed at this point. He throws the nuts in the oven to heat up, and we all agree with giggles that there is nothing nicer than a handful of warm nuts.

The girls share the peeling of quail's eggs to make canapes.

We peel quail's eggs and whisk up homemade mayonnaise for dainty canapés, we are assured by Thierry that if one were to make this in advance without the distraction of friends and wine, it would take only minutes to throw together and not the hour it has taken us. As the next bottle of bubbles is popped, we begin to imagine ourselves as slick head chefs and actually believe him.

People grab jotter pads and earnestly note down key tips to repeat at home. We bustle around clearing space while the monkfish gets trimmed of bits of skin, membrane and bone. We mix salad and learn how to present food on the plate so it looks the part and livens itself up. We shred sun blushed tomatoes and artichokes and delicately add to our masterpiece. Thierry appears out of nowhere and rejigs everything we've done to show us how one makes it look like an adult has actually been on the scene, and enthused by how easy it looks we grapple with salad leaves, sweet chillis, and anti pasti to mimic his plate.

With a flick of the wrist the monkfish is tossed in seasoned flour, pan fried over a hot high flame and placed gently steaming onto the bed of luscious and lovingly adorned leaves, or perhaps the presence of a French man was all a bit too much for a room full of women ...

Pudding was thrown together while we munched away and gazed on as Thierry whirred around the kitchen talking us through his moves. He crushed shortbread biscuits, jazzed up tinned pears, dolloped ice cream, and melted chocolate. Insider tips stream out and we all nod and sip wine, satisfyingly stuffed and happy at our impressive three courses all made from the contents of my fridge. Who'd have thought you could make that from a salad drawer, ketchup, fish and a bag of crisps.

As he leaves us to chat over our Fleurie about clothes and boys, we are handed goodie bags beautifully presented with chocolates tied up in bunches and handmade biscuits inside. Something a bit different to do of an evening and something anybody who enjoys food, wine and laughs with friends should put on their agenda.

The raw ingredients

THIERRY COMES with 22 years of experience and can cater for almost any occasion. He will come to your home to cook for a special dinner party, organise and cater your wedding or simply come to your home for a cookery demonstration with the food of your choice. He works closely with Tuk Tuk of Stamford, a top class Thai chef so he can organise a Thai event, too.

Prices range from £25-£50 per person depending on whether ingredients are included.

Telephone 01780 482700 for further information and be sure to mention embrace magazine.

Cool blue ...

RETRO is cool and Blue Nun is making a comeback with its Pinot Grigio Riesling.

If you remember the days of washing down bangers and Smash with a glass of Blue Nun, you'll be delighted to know the brand has grown up and offers a range of quality, easy-drinking wines.

You can still get Blue Nun Original, but why not try Blue Nun Rose and Blue Nun Merlot. Prices start at £3.99.

... green ...

BANROCK Station has introduced greener packaging for its Shiraz and Chardonnay wines.

You can now buy them in an Ecomate Tetra Pak as well as standard glass bottles. You'll find the Ecomates at the Tesco store in Oakham.

and red hot

HERE'S a red hot gadget for wine lovers. This chromed steel 'sceptre' is stored in the freezer. Insert it into a cold bottle and it maintains an ideal serving temperature for up to an hour while allowing you to pour through the sceptre. It costs £98.99 from www.aroundwine.co.uk