

# Scone Spy

Our undercover cafe critic rates the bakes



Family-run Doyle's Cafe's cosy interior

## Doyle's Cafe

80 Buchanan St, Balfron

A Scone Spy's work is never done. Wherever I am in the world I cannot pass a cafe without checking out the baking cabinet.

Last week I was visiting friends in Balfron when I happened across a neat little eatery on the main street running through the village, in Stirlingshire's Endrick valley.

My hosts told me Doyle's is a family run cafe and deli, which offers breakfasts and lunch six days a week. Friday evening is pizza night and you can order sit-in or takeaway.

We were invited to sit down at one of the freshly scrubbed pine tables by the friendly owner, Jack, who runs Doyle's with his wife Jo.

It was almost lunchtime and the place was filling up nicely. Judging by the fact Jack knew most customers by name, I could see his shop is a real hub for the community. I'm told it's also popular with passing cyclists, who you often see sitting at one of their outdoor tables sipping a coffee.

The lunch menu offers a selection of baked potatoes, omelettes and salads as well as freshly made paninis and ciabattas with a variety of fillings.

My friend swore by the Hoots Mon Panini,

that's haggis, mozzarella and sweet chilli sauce in a toasted panini. It's so good that he has not been tempted to try anything else from the menu despite living in the village for 10 years.

I'm happy to say he was not wrong. The sandwich, which came with a side salad, homemade coleslaw and a handful of mini pretzles, was so moreish, I felt slightly bereft after my last mouthful was gone. My other companion opted for the healthier option of the goats cheese salad. She described it as "lovely, tangy cheese, crisp salad and a dressing made balsamic vinegar".

I was delighted to discover all Doyle's bread and cakes are homemade, too.

The scone, when it arrived, was obviously just baked. It was still warm, light and airy and had a delicately sweet, buttery aroma. It was accompanied by butter and a dollop of raspberry jam. It was the highlight to a perfect afternoon.

Bidding my friends farewell later that day, promised to come back soon. And I'll be visiting my new favourite cafe again too.



**Scone score**  
Hand baked, airy and buttery. A delight.

8/10

# On my plate

## Spice up your life by breaking the rules in the kitchen

Asian cooking expert Leemei explains why we should all be more creative with our recipes

WORDS  
ALICE HINDS

When it comes to the debates held about cooking in kitchens around the world, Leemei Tan-Boisgillot believes the process of balancing flavours and selecting ingredients has more to do with art than science.

The award-winning food writer says recipes shouldn't be "bound by rules" but should, instead, work as guidelines that allow and encourage homecooks to get creative with their own adjustments and additions - at least that's exactly how she likes to whip up dinner.

"For me cooking is an art - you have to be flexible," explained Tan-Boisgillot, who grew up in Kedah in north-west Malaysia, before living in London for more than a decade. "You don't have to follow a recipe exactly, you can always try to create your own version. I don't like to just go 'one, two, three, four, five'. I like to change dishes a little bit, make something new and getting creative. I really enjoy putting my own twist on things."

A prime example of a dish that can be given a fresh update for each diner, Tan-Boisgillot says, is coconut and lemongrass scented rice served with squid sambal, which features in her new cookbook, *The Asian Home Kitchen*. A traditional Malaysian dish that's cooked in most homes, the rice-based recipe can be served with a range of toppings, from the

Leemei says we shouldn't always follow recipes to the letter

spicy yet fresh squid she loves, to crunchy Korean-fried chicken.

She explained: "In Malaysia, we would call this nasi lemak - nasi means rice and lemak means rich. Using coconut milk gives a richness to the rice, and my recipe is just an example of what you can serve. You can use any protein you like, including chicken or fish, so it's a very versatile dish with no hard rules. Plus, all the ingredients are pretty standard in Malaysian cooking."

What's more, she says, Asian dishes lend themselves particularly well to being tweaked for individual tastes, making the cuisine perfect for those who love to experiment.

She continued: "When you have dishes that use chilli, for example, some people might think it will

be too spicy. But with this style of cooking it's easy to start off mild and then add more. Although, remember, once you've added, you can't take away! It's easy to adapt things like soy sauce and sesame oil to your own liking, too."

Filled with more than 100 modern takes on dishes from across Asia, including Sri Lankan curries and Thai stir-fries, Tan-Boisgillot's new collection of recipes is an updated edition of her debut cookbook, *Lemongrass and Ginger*, which won a Gourmand World Cookbook Award when it was released 10 years ago.

As well as bringing together everything from home cooking and street foods to healthy takeaways and family favourites, *The Asian Home Kitchen* also includes a section on basic recipes, covering



spice pastes, condiments, rice and noodles that can either be key part of the dish or a welcome accompaniment.

Having learned to cook from a young age in her mum's kitchen, Tan-Boisgillot says it's important to always start with the basics. "When I started cooking with my mum, I would say I was a very obedient observer", she explained with a laugh. "I started with very little tasks, like chopping and peeling, but I think that really helped to give me a good basis."

"My best advice for new or returning cooks is to start by trying something that is less challenging, with a short list of ingredients. That's a good start because it will boost your confidence. Start from easy then go to slightly more complicated then maybe do something that takes more time - it's a journey. It's the same as when I started cooking when I was little. I started with really easy stuff and then grew and learned along the way. And definitely remember that mistakes are OK. We all learn from them."

Since her first book was released, Tan-Boisgillot believes Asian-fusion cooking has become more and more popular around the world, with many homecooks now attempting to

recreate dishes they would commonly find in restaurants. So, having the opportunity to update her collection of favourite recipes, inspired by everything from travels and family memories, has been perfect timing.

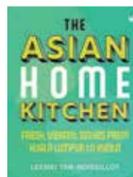
"To get ingredients, you don't have to go specifically to Asian stores any more - places like Tesco have an entire section where you can find Asian ingredients," she said. "It's not unreachable, but I also think people shouldn't feel uncomfortable to substitute ingredients as well. One of the principles in my book making sure the ingredients are adjustable so that they are widely accessible for people to cook."

"The purpose of this book is to get the message across to people: don't be afraid to try cooking new recipes - it may seem difficult, but as soon as you get a hang of one recipe or two, you'll just get better."

"Lemongrass and Ginger was like my first baby. It has been 10 years but, for me, it doesn't feel like it was that long ago so. To write recipes down is wonderful because it's an opportunity to share with a lot of people. It was just a wonderful experience to be able to express myself through food."

*The Asian Home Kitchen*, Nourish Books, £20, is out now

For me cooking is an art - you must be flexible



Leemei's fool-proof method for the perfect boiled long-grain rice

**You'll need:**  
● 350g long-grain rice, such as jasmine and basmati

**Method:**

1. Put the rice in a large saucepan and pour in enough water to half fill the pan. Swirl the rice using your hand, lightly rubbing the grains, until the water is cloudy. Carefully pour off the water and repeat this process three or four times until the water is almost clear

2. Cover the rice with water and leave to stand for 30 minutes. Drain the rice into a sieve and leave to sit over a bowl for 10 minutes, then transfer the rice to a saucepan and add 455ml water. Place the pan over a high heat and bring to the boil for about 20 seconds. Stir the rice with a wooden spoon to prevent the rice sticking to the base of the pan and then reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer gently for 20 minutes.

3. Remove the pan from the heat, leaving the lid tightly closed, and leave to steam for 10-15 minutes until the rice is cooked. Fluff the rice with a fork and keep warm.

How to make your own rendang spice paste

**You'll need:**

- 8 dried chillies
- 4 red chillies, deseeded and roughly chopped
- 5 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 1 red onion, roughly chopped
- 10 shallots, roughly chopped
- Lemongrass stalk, outer leaves and stalk end removed and roughly chopped
- 2cm piece of fresh ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2cm piece of galangal, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2cm piece of fresh turmeric, peeled and roughly chopped, or 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tbsp ground coriander
- 1 tsp ground cumin

**Method:**

4. Soak the dried chillies in hot water for 10 minutes, then drain, deseed and roughly chop. Put all the ingredients, except the ground turmeric, if using, coriander and cumin, in a food processor and blend to a smooth paste. Add the ground turmeric, coriander and cumin and mix well.

GOES WELL WITH

## Which Wine?

Our expert Diana Thompson chooses the best bottles for you



**Errazuriz Estate Reserva Merlot 2021**, Curico Valley Chile, £9, Tesco and Majestic

Summer red fruits, black cherries with touch of spice and mocha - a guaranteed crowd-pleaser.



**Ramón Bilbao Rosado 2021**, Rioja DOfa, Spain, £8, Tesco

Delicious rhubarb and refreshing ripe citrus characters give this rosé unique status.



**Case Paolin 'Col Fondo' Asolo Prosecco DOfC**, Veneto, Italy, £16, WoodWinters

Wonderfully full flavoured Prosecco with fresh, crunchy windfall apple characters and a touch of spice. All these characters call out to be paired with Asian spices so try it with this one of Leemei's recipes.

www.wineevents.scotland.com @WineEventsScot



Prompt and friendly service at Tony Macaroni

## Restaurant of the week

### Tony Macaroni

352 Brandon Street, Motherwell

#### Location

Right in the centre of the town, it's easy to reach and well placed for people-watching if you bag a seat by the window.

#### First impressions

With the stone walls, little booths and atmospheric lighting, there's a contemporary feel which contrasts with traditional solid wooden floors and tables and chairs.

#### Service

We're greeted by a lovely waitress who caters for our every whim, brings colouring for the children and all with a smile.

#### Menu

The menu is huge. There are 15 different types of bruschetta, 27 pizzas to choose from and 26 styles of pasta, not to mention risottos, ribs and fish and meat dishes. Even the fussiest of eaters are guaranteed to find a dish they like. We found the hardest part was whittling it down to a plate each.

#### Taste

We go for the bruschetta and BBQ chicken wings to start and both are delicious. The portions are a good size. And we follow it with a spicy salami pizza and spaghetti con polette - spaghetti with meatballs - for mains. The pizza is cooked to perfection and the meatballs are divine. The kids lap up their pizza and macaroni cheese in silence... a sure sign they're enjoying it. For dessert we go for a raspberry snowball delight sundae which I would highly recommend but, even sharing, we struggle to finish it.

#### Ambience

The restaurant is busy, but tucked away in our booth, we feel cosy and relaxed. A lovely place just to chill.

#### Price

At £53 for two adults and two children, it's a bargain! Sunday is a good day to visit as they have a special menu. Quality food at a good price.



We strongly recommend trying a cocktail - or a mocktail. We can vouch for the orange and raspberry mojito. Tasty and refreshing.

