

Book review

Kitchen Chemistry. T. Lister, H. Blumenthal. Royal Society of Chemistry, London, UK (2005). xvii+125 pp., £19.50, ISBN: 0-85404-389-6

Chemistry is all around us and affects many aspects of our daily lives, but all too often we overlook the beneficial impact of chemical sciences. The chemistry of food and cooking is just an example of the many roles chemistry plays in our everyday lives. *Kitchen Chemistry* is based on a scientific approach to cooking and makes chemistry more accessible because it brings together scientific theory and everyday practicality. This resource presents some chemistry that is relevant to the school and college curriculum, which is used daily in the kitchen, both in homes and restaurants, and which makes the food we eat more pleasurable. The Royal Society of Chemistry is pleased that some chefs are bringing a scientific approach to their kitchen skills, and this unusual volume was produced in partnership with Heston Blumenthal (chef and proprietor of the Fat Duck, named best restaurant in the world by Restaurant magazine), and it is hoped that it will lead to a revival in the role of chemistry in preparing the food we eat.

This book covers a wide variety of activities, from practical classes and demonstrations to reading comprehension and paper-based exercises. Each chapter deals with an aspect of the chemistry of food and/or cooking: the use

of salt in cooking (does it increase the boiling point of water? Does it affect the colour and texture of cooked vegetables?), the chemistry of baking powder, enzymes and jellies (to devise and carry out experiments to test simple hypotheses), the chemistry of flavour, chemical changes during cooking (revision of some organic reactions, in particular three types of reactions that cause food to brown), the science of ice cream (understanding the relationship between intermolecular forces and solubility), asparagus and chilli peppers (revision of amino acids, mass spectrometry, organic synthesis, organic structural formulae, etc.).

Kitchen Chemistry is a reference for the support of education in the field of chemical sciences. It is suitable for a wide range of ages, from primary to post-16, and reinforces the idea that everything is made of chemicals and that there is little difference between synthetic and natural chemicals.

Sandrine Rio
John F. Kennedy*
*Chembiotech Laboratories,
Institute of Research & Development,
University of Birmingham Research Park,
Birmingham B15 2SQ, UK*

Available online 11 July 2006

* Corresponding author.