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PRESS RELEASE

HEARTTHROB CHEF JAMES MARTIN BRINGS FOOD MAGIC TO CHILDREN FOR FOCUS ON FOOD WEEK



James Martin delighted pupils – and their mums - when he shared his passion for cooking with infants at a Derbyshire School.

And the star of Saturday Kitchen and Strictly Come Dancing, best-known for his delicious desserts, proved what a sweetie he really is by giving his time to support *Focus on Food Week* by putting on his chef's whites and cooking with the children aboard a *Focus on Food Cooking Bus*.

"This is what counts," he said. "People on the ground teaching children how to cook."

James has supported the *Focus on Food Campaign* since it began almost a decade ago. He said he was delighted to see it going from strength to strength.

"This is a great concept. Children do not always have the facilities to do cooking in schools – the cooking classroom at my old school is no longer there it is an English classroom! "It is one of the fundamental requirements for life and we have to learn to cook."

James took time out to support the *Focus on Food Campaign's* annual awareness week by joining the youngsters aboard one of *Focus on Food's* Cooking Buses – gigantic articulated lorries which open out into unique kitchen/classrooms. The Buses travel the country giving cooking lessons to primary and secondary school children and teaching teachers and others in the community. The Bus James joined is sponsored by the Food Standards Agency.

He went down on his knees to demonstrate some basic cooking techniques to the five and six year olds from Hasland Infant School, Chesterfield in Derbyshire, who made Vegetable Kebabs and scrumptious salads and fruit smoothies from produce grown in the school garden.

James, who told the children he first started cooking at the age of six when he made shortbread, helped them perfect their techniques. Delighted mums were able to watch as cameras inside broadcast what was going on via a plasma screen on the side of the Bus.

One mum must have blushed though as a little girl proudly told him: "My mum fancies you!"

The *Focus on Food Campaign* is the UK's leading food education outreach programme. The *Cooking Buses* are staffed by qualified teachers who teach children and the wider community how to cook through hands-on experience. They also train teachers and health professionals how to deliver quality cooking lessons in the Curriculum.

James has been involved with the school in Chesterfield, where he has been involved with their garden project for about eight months.

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James first met renowned gardener Gerald Treweek during filming for the BBC programme The Great British Village Show. Gerald was keen to start a vegetable garden at his grandson's school in Chesterfield and James was happy to lend his support.

"To me it has been the culmination of eight months work. And to have something like the Cooking Bus come as well is brilliant," said James.

It was the first time James had visited the school and its garden. It was he that suggested the Cooking Bus should visit and show the children how to cook what they were growing. He also called in to say hello to the dinner ladies – crossing the playground to cheers and cries of "Saturday Kitchen" from the youngsters.

"We believe cooking is a key life skill which should be taught to all pupils in all schools throughout their time in education," said Anita Cormac, director of the *Focus on Food Campaign*. "It is very heartening to have support from people like James who can help spread the message of the *Focus on Food Campaign*."

James finished the visit by giving an exclusive demonstration of his trademark sugarcraft. Little faces lit up in disbelief as he turned the white granules into intricate and elaborate spun sugar swirls and cages. Golden candyfloss from the golden boy.

"He's just magic!" said one little fan.

Ends

NOTES:

Focus on Food Week runs from June 25

For more information on the Food Standards Agency and the FSA sponsored Cooking Bus visit www.food.gov.uk

James Martin visited Hasland Infant School, Chesterfield. The headteacher is Jenny Lord who can be contacted on 01246 234745

For further information please contact **Hannah Ridgeway**

Communications Manager
Focus on Food/Design Dimension
Dean Clough, Halifax
West Yorkshire HX3 5AX
E: Hannah@designdimension.org
T: 01422 383191 or 0782532708

