A DAY IN THE LIFE

a day in the life...

of Julie Walsh

Like fishermen, market traders and milkmen, Julie rises with the larks at 5.30 each morning, relishing her first caffeine hit of the day, while she busies herself making a packed lunch and dragging son Rowan sleepily from the land of nod. A 6.30am drop at the childminder’s means she can catch the 7am train to London. There’s just time for another coffee before she changes into her chef’s whites, ready for the first class of the day at 8am. A practical lesson with 10 students sees Julie sharing her expertise in making artisan bread – hands on learning is an important part of the methodology at Le Cordon Bleu. “I’m constantly answering questions and reinforcing techniques, so there’s no time to eat or drink, although I do get to sample the students’ work as I go along,” says Julie.

“At midday, the first class ends, and so I set the room for the next session. There’s time to grab lunch with my students, and I try to eat something substantial now, like pasta with a tomato sauce from the production kitchen. As it’s a French cookery school, there’s plenty of cream and butter around, so I try not to have too much!”

Afternoon class is a chocolate demonstration with 60 students. “We make macaroons and chocolate sculptures, then the students get to taste what I’ve made,” Julie says. Judging final-assessment pieces at 3pm sounds fantastic, but after 60 portions of gateau, chocolate tart and strawberry cakes, Julie admits she feels thoroughly sick!

Reflecting on her day job, Julie says: “The breadth of my role at Le Cordon Bleu is massive – I have three levels of students (basic, intermediate and superior), that I do my best to instil the foundations of French Patisserie into. Demonstrations and hands-on practical classes make up my day, which means I am on my feet the entire time (as any chef is), and constantly talking and assessing the student’s work. I am very passionate about my work and my students, and I mentor them while studying at Le Cordon Bleu. It is extremely satisfying for me to see them grow and master the skills necessary to become the next generation of patisserie chefs.”

At 7pm Julie picks up Rowan and heads home for bath and bedtime routine. Juggling the demands of being a mother and a chef is tricky, but it’s all about balance says Julie: “It’s not easy, but I do my best to spend quality time with my son – we enjoy cooking together and he is actually pretty good! My work is rewarding but my home time with Rowan is that and so much more.”

Julie grabs dinners around 9pm - a small salad or a light snack, then catches up with a little TV before collapsing into bed at 11pm - that is if she’s not already asleep on the sofa!