"YOU must polish your pear", I'm told.

Polish a pear? You can't be serious. But Chef Loïc IS serious.

Founded in 1895 in Paris, Le Cordon Bleu is the flagship in cookery schooling. In 1933, London's own school opened and, over the past 30 years, countless others have across the world.

London's second school opens in 2012 and they are introducing a range of shorter culinary masterclasses from just £90 for a one-day course – an ideal Christmas gift.

Really serious cooks study for diplomas in "cuisine" or "patisserie" and that can last up to 45 weeks.

They lead up to the Grand Diplôme which is 900 hours and £25,000.

Princess Di once applied, Julia Child (of Julia And Julia) was a student, as was chef Allen Susser and even Dustin Hoffman – and now me.

OK, so I can cook and friends will compliment my prawn curry and lemon cheesecake but this is top-level stuff.

"Polish it to make it smooth, after peeling," Chef Loïc continues.

We're in Paris on our two-day Le Cordon Bleu experience and I'm in my element.

Day One was in London, tackling patisserie and making croissant, pain au chocolat, macaroon and chocolate truffles.

Day Two is about to get serious for six journalists. Chef Loïc is a genius in food, as is his partner for the day, Chef Frederic.

Demand for the courses is huge, hence they are creating new, shorter versions with schools opening all the time.

From bankers and lawyers wanting something new to women keen to branch out a bit in the kitchen, Le Cordon Bleu does the lot. Before I know it, we are flying around the kitchen creating our three-course menu.

La Mouclade, that's mussels in spiced cream sauce to you and me, is to start. Then it's pan-roasted duck with thyme, fole gras, cepes mushrooms in a red wine and Madeira sauce with pomme anna (potato slices spiralled with lashings of butter and cooked in a ring).

For dessert, my perfectly buffed pear, poached in red wine and cinnamon on a pastry base with vanilla cream.

I feel comfortable I'm doing things right – mostly because I have a Michelin standard chef behind me tutting a split-second before I do it wrong.

With the incredible guidance of Loïc and Frederic, I get the dishes out on time. The best part is... I get to eat them – and they are a bit good.

DEAN SCOGGINS

FOR information on courses at Le Cordon Bleu London, go to lcbondon.com or call 020 7935 3503. Bookings open soon for the 2012 courses and are often booked up a year in advance. Find full details for the Paris Cordon Bleu School – with prices from just £70 for a day course – at cordonbleu.edu/lcb-paris/en.