

Now we are ready to start.

One of the most popular reality TV series in the UK these days is called "Come dine with me". It is shown throughout the week with four (or sometimes five) individuals each cooking a meal for the others in their own homes. Each meal is voted for by the other guests and the person who collects the highest score from the other guests at the end of the week wins a J.000 prize.

It is successful for a number of reasons. First of all there are the recipes. Each guest is doing all they can to impress the others by planning their evening as host, carefully selecting and preparing ingredients. Generally the funniest part of the program is when the one cooking is in their own kitchen panicking and trying, often unsuccessfully, to cook overambitious dishes. They frantically turn the pages of recipe books or make frantic phone calls for advice while outwardly trying to appear calm and in control. Sometimes dishes break, or roasts get turned to ash in an overheated oven or the soup ends up on the floor; often accompanied by memorable but not necessarily polite use of the English language.

The next piece of TV joy is being in each person's house, seeing their decor and lay out and enjoying them trying to outshine their fellow guests. Why people are so fascinated by other peoples' houses I cannot begin to guess. But I have to confess that I am as nosy as everyone else.

Finally there is the meal and you get to hear all the conversation (public and private) between the guests as they praise or condemn their host. Finally comes the judging (marks out of 10) when each member of the house party privately gives the host cook a score. The programme runs through the week starting on a Monday and finishing with the final result being announced on a Friday. Some of the "stars" of the programme go on to become national favourites and some of them even attain minor celebrity status.

There is also a celebrity version of the program unimaginatively entitled "Celebrity Come Dine with me". It is exactly the same format but of course viewers already know who the people are and something about their lives: And it is really interesting to see these people's real houses, to see how they live and listen in on all the celebrity gossip. The prizes for the celebrity version always go to charity.

I am thinking about applying to be on the show. It would be really good fun if I was chosen. In my imagination I can imagine trying to impress my guests with lines like "of course I caught the fish myself" and "I had these specially imported from Bolivia". The reality is that I am not a good cook and I never use recipe books. However I do enjoy cooking and I love dinner parties and conversation. Maybe I will just roll up my courage and apply.