

James Martin once famously, and affectionately described Ken Hom CBE as 'half man-half wok', and as the person responsible for the creation of the #Woktober project, which started pre covid, I'm not in the habit of half doing anything, so I reached for the stars when I approached Ken to add his magic touch to something close to my heart as a man living with prostate cancer.

After all, imagine trying to get a big wine tasting event off the ground without the likes of Robert M. Parker Junior, the doyen of the palate at the helm, or attempting to get lift off for a UK Astronaut's rocket idea simulation without approaching Tim Peake. So I asked Ken, and just like the man from that famous Spanish orange producer, he said yes.

The project comes under the umbrella of @ChemoCookery on Twitter, an idea launched in 2018. It's all about promoting nutrition, fresh produce and healthy lifestyle, each, of course, a huge part of Ken's mantra. Woktober itself, a play on words, takes place in, cue drum roll, October, and guest chefs are invited to devise and cook a recipe in a wok, (hopefully one of the 8 million Ken Hom versions).

This year, there's a real international flavour to it, pun very much intended, as chefs from around the world are being invited. For starters, a lady who needs no introduction is Ching He Huang, making her second appearance, oozing talent, and fresh from regular appearances on BBC Saturday kitchen. Then, from the USA, it's Ken's good friend Martin Yan, who is set to open two new restaurants this Summer, one in Las Vegas, and the other in San Francisco. Joining them are top cooks from France, Ireland, Scotland, Australia and many more still to be announced. Watch this space.

I'm so honoured that Ken is headlining the event again, he gets asked to do so much, now we now as mentioned earlier, he's half man, half wok, but he can't split himself in any more pieces....(although I'll give it a try).

So, he will bookend the event, cooking on the 1st and 31st of the month, with a veritable feast of surprises in between. Catch it all on line @ChemoCookery on twitter, and please feel free to join in the chat and use the hashtag #Woktober, it's great fun and very educational. Last time around Ken made a wonderful hot cucumber dish, which went down a storm and I made, inspired by Ken, a Chinese wood ear mushroom salad, simplicity itself, rich in fibre, with a motherlode of vitamins, colourful ingredients and it was fragrant and filling. Job done.

We're living in a mad world, so a splash of colour, something a little different and, most importantly something a little different gives us all a pleasant distraction.

John Hanley
Chemo Cookery