

Daddy cooks and sews

As an art teacher at CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School, Mr Foo Kwee Horng, 41, often tells his students never to be subservient to men.

"Don't put up with their lousy attitude," he urges the teenagers.

And the father of two girls backs up his words. At home, a terrace house in Upper Thomson, he splits the chores with his wife Lim Jim Jim, 39, who is in the civil service. They do not have a maid.

Three to four times a week, he prepares dinner for the family, often concocting dishes such as baked crabs or mushrooms with tuna and garlic.

"If he cooks, I wash. He cooks more often," says Ms Lim. On other days, she cooks or the family eats out. The couple have two daughters, Foo Myn, 12, and Foo Yihn, 10.

"But if friends come to visit, they know that it will be me in the kitchen," says Mr Foo jovially.

In the early part of the 14½-year marriage, it was he who taught her the finer points of cooking.

"He would tell me to add this and that, put the stove on high heat, stuff like that," says Ms Lim. "Growing up, I never learnt how to cook because my mum was a housewife and the kitchen was hers and hers alone."

Conversely, Mr Foo grew up in a family where men took charge in the kitchen. His late father, who worked as a freight forwarder, loved to cook, as did several uncles who worked as chefs.

The kitchen arrangement came about naturally. Because he gets home from school earlier than her, he prepares dinner. They share the grocery runs.

He also does the "big cleaning chores" such as mopping and vacuuming and tends to the garden. But he draws the line at ironing. "I pretend I don't know how to do it," he says cheekily.

He has sewn several pillow cases and curtains for the house too.

"Once in a while we grumble at each other to do this and that," he says. "But I can't expect my wife to do everything because she works as well."

The couple are also getting their daughters to take responsibility around the house. Both have to fold their own laundry, while elder girl Foo Myn has learnt how to cook meals such as spaghetti.

"We want to train our girls to be independent," says Ms Lim, adding that the family chose not to have a maid.

Mr Foo pays for the family's meals but makes it a point to show his daughters the receipt so that they know how much the food cost. "The message is that it is something I can do, but not something I have to do," he adds.



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MR FOO KWEE HORNG (above) with (from left) his daughters Foo Myn, 12, and Foo Yihn, 10, and his wife Lim Jim Jim