

'I can't believe how easy life is in British prisons'

TelegraphUK | June 9, 2012

Gordon Ramsay, the chef, has criticised the level of comfort provided in Britain's prisons after teaching inmates to cook for a new television series.



Gordon Ramsay said he was astounded when he discovered convicted criminals were given five meal choices every night and constant access to television, video games and gym facilities. Photo: REX

Ramsay, 45, said he was astounded when he discovered convicted criminals were given five meal choices every night and constant access to television, video games and gym facilities.

The restaurateur visited London's Brixton Prison to film *Behind Bars*, a Channel 4 show in which he teaches 12 inmates to cook and sell their *Bad Boys' Bakery* produce to businesses on the outside.

However, he said he was disappointed with the prisoners' lack of work ethic, claiming the lax regime inside gave them no incentive to toil over a stove.

"What I wasn't prepared for was how easy it was for them in there. I was astounded at the comfort zone they carve out for themselves," Ramsay told *The Guardian's* Weekend magazine.

“Five meal choices a night – that was the one I really struggled with. I just thought it was a bit of a joke, to be honest, coupled with the 24-hour television, Xbox, DVDs, gym.

“We can’t watch television until four o’clock in the morning. I’d like to have a gym seven days a week, by the way.”

He added that seeing how soft the regime behind bars was made him feel “angry” and “quite embarrassed”.

“I thought we were a nation of grafters, I thought we had the spirit of working harder than anyone.

“Yeah, and why would they want to come and bust their ---- for 10 hours a day when it was easy for them to do nothing? I find that hard to come to terms with.”

He said he was flabbergasted by the quality of the equipment provided for inmates to cook with, adding: “Even a professional chef on the outside doesn’t just walk into a kitchen that good.”

The chef also disclosed that the project posed unique security challenges due to the use of knives in the kitchen as well the reaction of prisoners with “impulse control issues” when confronted by his trademark boisterous manner and language.

It was disclosed that filming for the programme was eventually cut short amid concerns that Ramsay’s visits to the wings were causing too much disruption.

However, the inmates’ business is beginning to take off with 11 branches of Caffé Nero in London now stocking their cakes and wraps.