



Gordon uncovered

You ask, he answers

Our readers give Gordon a good grilling on food, footie and foul fish
Photograph MYLES NEW

If you ever decided to have a career change, what would you do?

'I can't imagine doing anything else. Perhaps a football coach, although my son Jack would have something to say about that. A couple of months ago, he missed what could have been a great goal and I screamed: "You should have gone to Specsavers!" All the other dads glared at me.'

What's your idea of food heaven and hell?

'Sea bass is the king of fish so my idea of food heaven would be a beautiful fillet, pan-fried with a light sorrel sauce; or served roasted with artichokes and a chive crème fraîche. My food hell is any ready meal. It's so easy to prepare a quick meal using fresh produce, such as a simple stir-fry, but people still resort to ready meals that all taste exactly the same.'

What do you think will be the next big food trend over the coming decade?

'I think there's going to be a return to Escoffier-inspired grill rooms. Expect dishes to be simpler, with the produce really speaking for itself, and looking less fussy. It's something we're really focusing on for the launch of The Savoy Grill later this year.'

When was the last time you indulged in a Pot Noodle, Ginsters, McDonald's or other guilty pleasure?

'I can't remember, but not for a long time. I'd never touch a Pot Noodle and although I love a good burger, it wouldn't be from McDonald's. That said, I'm a sucker for some unhealthy treats – I love chocolate and can't get enough of gummy sweets.'

Describe the last thing you cooked that went horribly wrong?

'I can't remember the last time something went really wrong. But right at the start of my career, I did a stint at a resort in the French Alps. One day the head chef asked me to put the fresh bouillabaisse (fish soup) outside in the freezing cold to chill it. By the evening it had festered and formed a thick froth on top. It was absolutely disgusting.'

If we were to explore your kitchen cupboards, what one ingredient would you be most embarrassed for us to find?

'You wouldn't find any embarrassing ingredients. I try to cook as much as possible from fresh produce, plus we keep a good stock of dried goods in the house, such as pasta. We try to be very conscious of what we feed the kids and they're only allowed pudding as a special treat. I'm the naughty one when it comes to sweets – I try to persuade Tana I'm putting them in the cupboard as a treat for the kids, but she sees straight through it.'

What's the best advice someone has given you, and who gave it?

'Never waste anything – that came from French chef, Guy Savoy. At the restaurants I'd been working at, we would use the best cuts of meat or the most favoured bit of the vegetable and throw away the rest. At Guy Savoy's restaurant it was a different story. You would use the best bit of meat or veg for the main part of the dish but the other parts were used for sauces, mousses or stocks.'

Following the success of Kitchen Nightmares and your background as a professional footballer, have you considered a Football Nightmares programme, highlighting the dietary habits of professional footballers?

'I don't think there's a need. Many of the professional clubs have incredible dieticians to make sure that their teams' diets maximise training and performance.'

Do the staff in your restaurants know in advance when you'll pay a visit?

'No, not generally. It's good to keep them on their toes. Recently, I made an unannounced visit to Angela Hartnett's Mayfair restaurant, Murano, following a long service. All the kitchen staff were clearing the restaurant down silently and thoroughly. That's what I expect to see.'

If you had the power to wipe one food or dish off the face of the earth, what would it be?

'Ready-made mashed potato. I've come across it at countless restaurants I've visited for Kitchen Nightmares and it's vile.'

Is there anything you think Tana cooks better than you?

'No. Absolutely not!'