

Rhodes

Famed British chef Gary Rhodes expresses his passion for simple, good food and explores Taste of Dubai 2010

to success

BBC Good Food ME: You were in Dubai last year for Taste of Dubai, and then again over Christmas and New Year at Rhodes Mezzanine. How are you feeling being back in Dubai for this year's Taste?

Gary Rhodes: I'm very excited. Taste of Dubai is a great culinary occasion and the best part is you get to share your food with a much wider audience. And, of course, you have the opportunity to eat a lot of exciting food from the best restaurants in town.

BBC GF ME: You have been quoted as saying that Taste of Dubai is the best Taste festival in the world. What do you think makes it superior to the other festivals?

GR: The general atmosphere makes Taste of Dubai very special. You see a strong family spirit, which in my opinion gives this particular Taste festival an edge over the others.

BBC GF ME: What are you most excited about for Taste of Dubai 2010?

GR: Showing off food from our next venture in the city, Rhodes Twenty 10. It's great to have the opportunity to introduce the people of Dubai to a new restaurant.

BBC GF ME: What do you think of the food scene in Dubai?

GR: The food scene in Dubai has done nothing but grow. About 10 years ago it really was nothing compared to what it is today – the city has something for everyone now. I have no doubt that in the next five to ten years Dubai will stand against any of the world's major cities as a great culinary capital.

BBC GF ME: What will you be preparing for this year's Taste?

GR: White tomato soup, slow-braised lamb with buttered potato and apple mint jelly and iced strawberries with clotted cream.

BBC GF ME: How would you say British cuisine has changed in the last 30 years?

GR: I think British cuisine has opened the eyes of eaters across the world in recent years. I believe Britain has the best produce. Since the world wars and days when food was rationed, people were living on budgets so their spending was limited, which as a result limited what they were cooking.

However, in the last 20 to 30 years we have opened our own doors and started making better use of the produce available and at Taste of Dubai I'll show you how to cook it!

BBC GF ME: Your most recent book, 365, has a brilliant selection of easy, everyday recipes. What advice would you give to aspiring cooks at home?

GR: Always buy that book! I think the simplest thing you can do is cook with the seasons. When people have dinner parties, they often try to hard. I always keep it simple – a dinner table is the best social point and you have to focus on drawing people there through friendship and warmth. That's my inspiration for 365, just making people aware about the simplicity of preparing a meal.

BBC GF ME: What gives you the greatest joy as a chef?

GR: I think that if in your entire life, you've discovered one unique dish there's no better joy. Chefs improve recipes that have existed for a long time, and create several of their own but if you can make just one classic that's entirely yours then there's nothing like it.

BBC GF ME: What is your first food memory? And what first drew you towards a career as a chef?

GR: I was a teenager (probably about 13) and I had made a steamed lemon sponge cake with lemon sauce. As I was serving it, the steam came up and I remember seeing this look of joy on everybody's face. It was their reaction to the dish, rather than the dish itself that made me decide that I wanted to be a chef.

BBC GF ME: You have travelled around the world exploring diverse tastes and recipes; to China, the Caribbean and Italy, to name a few places. What style of cuisine do you admire the most?

GR: I enjoy them all but if I had to pick one I'd say French. It's what I was taught at college and any British cuisine that I create has some French influence.

BBC GF ME: When in Dubai, where do you like to eat (other than Rhodes Mezzanine, of course)?

GR: Indego, by Vineet Bhatia. I'm a big fan of

Vineet and he's got a fantastic team here at Indego. I just love the food and am not only saying that because his restaurant is also at the Grosvenor House. If it had been at another hotel, I would have said the same.

Gary Rhodes will be representing Rhodes Mezzanine at Taste of Dubai 2010 and showcasing food from his next venture in the city - Rhodes Twenty 10



A rising *Star*

With a beautiful new cookbook out and restaurants opening across the globe, revered Indian chef Vineet Bhatia tells us more



Vineet Bhatia joins his team at Indego for Taste of Dubai 2010

BBC Good Food ME: Can you tell me a bit about your international restaurant ventures?

Vineet Bhatia: Our restaurant Rasoi by Vineet in Geneva, Switzerland recently won a Michelin star, so it's the first Indian restaurant in mainland Europe to win a star. So we have a Michelin star in London and in Geneva, so we are very happy about that. We are opening a restaurant in Bombay next month, and in May we open up in Tripoli. It is going to be a very busy next few months for us and I am very excited about it.

BBC GF ME: Do you need to adapt your restaurant concepts to suit different environments?

VB: When travelling, you learn so much and you improve as you learn. You are always open to new ideas and you pick up things and add them to your own context. Also, as a chef or restaurateur you

have to realise that you do not cook or serve your guests to please yourself, you are creating an experience to please your guests. Meeting or exceeding their expectations, nothing less than that. Each restaurant is tailor-made accordingly to its venue and each restaurant has its own identity.

BBC GF ME: How would you describe your concept of Indian cuisine?

VB: I would say it is evolved Indian, modern evolved Indian.

BBC GF ME: What inspires you to create your dishes?

VB: When cooking or serving food it has to please all the senses; eyes, nose, ears, mouth are all very important. People ask; how do you eat with your ears? But you do, because you put the cup down you hear the sound, when you turn the spoon it excites your palate. You have a piece of rice, bread or poppadom, you crack it and you anticipate certain things. You look at it, smell it, taste it. And with taste it is not just the sweet, sour and spicy flavours, textures are equally important.

BBC GF ME: You have recently launched your first cookbook Rasoi: New Indian Kitchen. Is this book for the experienced cook?

VB: It is not only for the experienced cook, but for the interested cook too. The book is based on stages and steps, like a small child who learns to sit, to move, to stand, to walk, to run; there are steps for you to grow with the book, but you have to learn the basics first. The cooking part of the book only starts on page 70. So I really go through the basics; you can spend time on ginger pastes, garlic pastes, butter, sauces, spice combinations. Once you understand those, then you take it from there and experiment as you go.

BBC GF ME: What inspired you to create a new style of Indian cuisine?

VB: I was always curious. When it came to food, I saw the chefs cook Indian food a certain way and I used to ask; why do you do it this way, why do you do it that way, why not another way? And, most of the time they couldn't give me an answer. When you can do something in a different manner and achieve a better product why don't you follow it?

BBC GF ME: Did you get resistance to your new ideas for Indian cuisine?

VB: I got a lot of resistance, and that is one of the

reasons I left India. Food had been prepared for thousands of years in a certain way, and people enjoyed it, and said why change it now? But if you do something else it could actually evolve. That is when I moved to London. With Indian food in India I wasn't allowed to experiment, I wasn't allowed to create and develop.

BBC GF ME: You are opening up a restaurant in Bombay next month, how does it feel to be going back?

VB: It is so special to me, because my new restaurant that I am opening in Bombay is at the same hotel where I first started my career. It is a beautiful room in the Oberoi, it overlooks the Arabian Sea and you can really see Bombay from there. I left Bombay in 1993, and now coming back it's a full circle. It is a shame that you have to leave your country and come back after 18 years to showcase what you have done. But what happens now, is that the next generation of chefs will not have to wait that long to develop new styles. We have laid down a very strong foundation and people will look back and see our dishes as classics in time to come.

BBC GF ME: Are you excited for this year's Taste of Dubai?

VB: This is the third Taste of Dubai I am attending, I was there at the first one; I have been there since day one with Grosvenor House. It is growing from year to year and I am excited to see how this one has developed. There are more people coming in, there is more interest.

BBC GF ME: Advice for aspiring cooks?

VB: Learn the basics and keep it simple. When you understand the basics, you can mix and match. Always ensure good quality products.

BBC GF ME: What is your greatest achievement to date?

VB: When I first opened my own restaurant Rasoi in London; our own money and our own restaurant and to get a Michelin star off our own back. The first Indian restaurant to win the star, we were making history in a way.



Ready, steady... *James*

James Martin's infectious enthusiasm for cooking has entertained television audiences the world over, and we are super excited to have him back in Dubai for this year's Taste



Learn some culinary tips from James Martin at Taste of Dubai 2010

BBC Good Food Middle East: You were in Dubai quite often last year, first at Taste of Dubai, and then at Jumeirah's Festival of Taste. How are you feeling being back for this year's Taste festival?

James Martin: Any opportunity to celebrate the fast-growing and diverse food scene I will be there. Taste festivals are unique as they offer the chance for all who visit to meet the chefs and restaurants.

BBC GF ME: What are you most excited about at this year's Taste of Dubai?

JM: Apart from the weather, I am looking forward to the opportunity, not only to do demonstrations but to also have sessions at the cookery school, which is great fun.

BBC GF ME: What are your thoughts on the world of food in Dubai?

JM: With so many restaurants there is such a large choice, some offering great packages however some feel too [expensive] and fail to offer value for money. This could be a simple burger to an AED 1000 meal. Value isn't down to how much you pay; you should judge a restaurant's success by the old saying: 'bums on seats'.

BBC GF ME: In terms of the food industry, what would you like to see more of in Dubai?

JM: With the new restaurant scene, there is limited choice were you can purchase your food from, and until the building dust settles we will know what works and what doesn't.

BBC GF ME: You mentioned in a 2008 interview that you wish to create your Northern England cuisine in the UAE; are you still interested in opening a restaurant in Dubai?

JM: I'm always on the look out for opportunities in Dubai lets just say I'm being a true Yorkshire man and biding my time.

BBC GF ME: Do you think there are restaurants in Dubai that create good British cuisine?

JM: I still looking for them – maybe I'll find some at Taste of Dubai this year!

BBC GF ME: What do you plan to showcase at this year's Taste?

JM: I will be celebrating local food with a British theme and above all else, making things accessible to people so they can do it at home.

BBC GF ME: How would you describe your style of cuisine?

JM: British food with local produce kept simple.

BBC GF ME: You have had so many fantastic achievements and success at such a young age. What has been your greatest moment as a chef?

JM: Too many people over here and in the UK base success on financial gains. Success should be about achievement and completion of personal goals. My biggest achievement and success came at 21 when I became head chef of Hotel Du Vin it was years of blood sweat and tears of training that I finally got the chance to have a restaurant.

BBC GF ME: What is your favourite dish to create for family and friends?

JM: Roast dinners, stews and pies are great they can be placed in the middle of the table and people just tuck in for a real family affair.

BBC GF ME: If you could name one mentor or someone who truly inspired you in your career, who would it be?

JM: My third year lecture at college, Mr Ken Allenson. He was an ex-army chef with a vast amount of knowledge that you could absorb.

BBC GF ME: When in Dubai, where do you like to eat?

JM: I have been to Zuma the last couple of times that I have been here and I just love it there, and for a quick bite to eat the Noodle House.