

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's chef and television presenter Rick Stein

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My waterproof Sony MP3 headphones I use while swimming, which I do most days at a pool near my home in west London or in the sea in Cornwall. I listen to music or podcasts like Desert Island Discs.

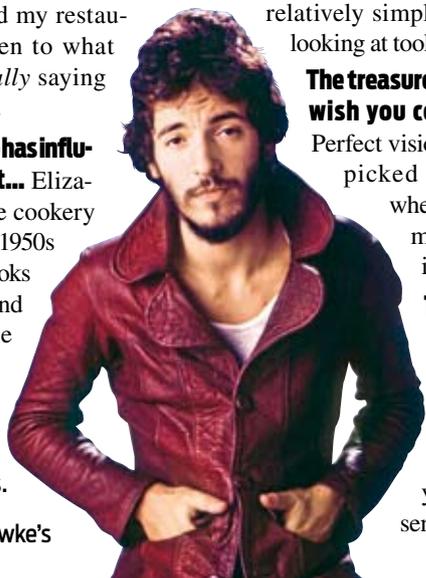
**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Not going to Miami with my wife Sas [Sarah] and my stepkids – Zach, 19, and Olivia, 17 – last year because I was writing a book. They went to Joe's Stone Crab restaurant, which I've wanted to go to for years.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** The Leopard by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, set in 19th-century Sicily. It's so stylish and evocative – I find new riches each time I read it.

**The priority activity if you were the invisible man for a day...** I'd wander around my restaurants and listen to what people are *really* saying about the food.

**The person who has influenced you most...** Elizabeth David, the cookery writer from the 1950s and 60s. Her books about France and Italy made me want to cook.

**Right:** Bruce Springsteen. **Above right:** marshmallows. **Far right:** Cape Kidnappers, Hawke's



**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Marshmallows! I have an aversion to them because of all that gelatin and their texture. They're gross.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Lord Byron. He had a club foot, yet swam the Hellespont [a strait in Turkey separating Europe from Asia, now known as the Dardanelles]. I'd like to know how he did it.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Don't panic. Inevitably you'll come across moments when you think you can't cope, but keep going, you *will* get through it.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** DIY. I find it therapeutic to focus my attention on something relatively simple. I actually enjoy looking at tools in Homebase.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** Perfect vision in my right eye. I picked up a weird virus when I was 16 and it left me very short-sighted in that eye.

**The song that means most to you...** Born To Run by Bruce Springsteen. It takes me back to my younger years when I had a sense of freedom.



**The film you can watch time and time again...**

Withnail And I. Richard E Grant is superb in it and I adore his manic behaviour.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To find the perfect restaurant with absolutely no faults.

**The poem that touches your soul...** The Waste Land by TS Eliot. It has such scope and depth. The more you read it, the more you understand.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm an extrovert because I do TV. I'm actually really introverted and shy and find it hard to talk to people at parties.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Opening The Seafood Restaurant in Padstow with my ex-wife Jill in 1975. It was the foundation for everything I've done since.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I would reverse Brexit. I love being part of Europe and have a real emotional problem with the thought of leaving.



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round and barbecue prawns and Blue Eye fish steaks, with salad and mayonnaise. I'd also have a few cold bottles of VB [Victoria Bitter] Aussie beer.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** The night I met Sas, who's Australian, when I was a judge at an event at a restaurant in Brisbane in 1997. We got married in 2011.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Aussie Cadbury Caramello bars – I love the softness of the centre. I always hope my wife hasn't left any in the fridge because I eat the lot.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** When my sister Janey died in 1984 from breast cancer aged 47. I fell apart emotionally and everything was black for years.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To paint. I love art and I think I have the right brain to do it, but I've never learnt. I'm 69, so I'd better get started.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Be kind – it's important to think of others.

**The order of service at your funeral...** Sas is 20 years younger than me, so I'll leave it up to her. I've already given her a couple of hymns I'd like.

**The way you want to be remembered...** As a happy cook.

**The Plug...** Rick Stein's Long Weekends is published by BBC Books, £25, and the new series is on BBC2 later this autumn. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Alicia Vikander and Michael Fassbender star in romantic drama *The Light Between Oceans* – in cinemas on Tuesday.

Glenda Jackson appears as King Lear at the Old Vic from Friday. And Alicia Keys' new album *Here* is out the same day



**NEXT WEEK**

● Claudia Fragapane on how *Strictly*'s made her sparkle ● Deserts and grasslands in part two of our spectacular Planet Earth series ● PLUS Britain's most detailed TV listings