



From top: The Iguazu Falls in Brazil, pinot noir wine, Alexander the Great, a Bang & Olufsen Beogram 4000 record player, Chagall's La Mariée, a violin and Julie Christie in Doctor Zhivago

The prized possession you value above all others... A Bang & Olufsen Beogram 4000 record player from 1972. It cost me about £50, which was a fortune then. It is a design of classic beauty.

The big regret you wish you could amend... Missing my sons growing up. I hardly saw Oli, 38, and Sebastien, 31, in their early years because I was working 18-hour days, six days a week. But things worked out well because we all have a loving bond now.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'd have a very early breakfast at a café in Place de l'Opéra in Paris and watch the city wake up. I'd have a triple espresso coffee and a croissant. I'd then go to the Maldives to walk on the finest white sand and scuba dive over a beautiful coral reef with my sons. It's best to have them with me because they have saved my life many times in the water! From there, I'd visit the lemon grass fields in Chiang Mai in northern Thailand. This amazing area has inspired me so much. I'd then marvel at Iguazu Falls in Brazil. For dinner, I'd go to the wonderful Japanese restaurant Zuma in London and have a feast with plenty of sake. I'd end the day back in Brazil, dancing the samba on the beach in Rio, before staying the night at the Copacabana Palace hotel.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Red pinot noir and cheese to unwind after work. I'm 63 and shouldn't eat such things so close to midnight!

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Idiot by 19th-century Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky. It's one of the great human dramas.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd guide the hands of world leaders from signing documents that create war and pain.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Bad eating manners. It's disrespectful to the food and the cook.

The film you can watch time and time again... Dr Zhivago. I love its frozen landscape and the mastery of its acting. Julie Christie is incredible and Omar Sharif is my hero. I met him recently and I hugged him and told him how much I admire him.

The person who has influenced you most... My mother Maman. She's 91 and when I was a boy she gave me a deep understanding of food, its purity and nobility, and how it celebrates life.



'When I was a 21 a chef hit me with a frying pan for questioning his cooking. It broke my jaw... but I ended up in England because of it'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: French master chef Raymond Blanc

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Alexander the Great. He was a military genius who ruled half the world when he was 22. To understand what drove him would be fascinating.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Always consider the consequences of whatever you do.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Sailing. I love to go out to sea on a one-man catamaran.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My innocence.

The unending quest that drives you on... The search for total excellence in everything that I do.

The poem that touches your soul... Le Dormeur du Val [The Sleeper Of The Valley] by the 19th-century French poet Arthur Rimbaud. It's about a soldier found dead in a valley and I first read it when I was 14. It was so moving it felt like a knife going into my flesh.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Being hit with a frying pan by a chef when I was 21 after I questioned his cooking. It broke my jaw and I lost my job. I was exiled to England and it was then that I knew what my life would be.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm a businessman. All that matters to me is the creation of something beautiful.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal Marc Chagall's painting La Mariée [The Bride]. I love Chagall's work.

The song that means most to you... Imagine by John Lennon. I am a romantic and its naivety is so touching.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Seeing the house for the first time in 1983 that was to become Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons [his two-Michelin-starred restaurant in Oxfordshire]. I saw it advertised for sale and fell in love, so I knocked on the door and the owner, Lady Cromwell, answered. I thought she was the cleaner! I told her I wanted to buy it, so she invited me in for tea and agreed to sell it to me.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death from liver cancer of my best friend René Simon when he was only 50. We grew up together.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... For Le Manoir to remain a centre of excellence.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Always be curious.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have a church service and they'd play Arvo Pärt's Spiegel im Spiegel with Tasmin Little on violin. I will prepare the menu for my friends to enjoy dinner afterwards with plenty of pinot noir.

The way you want to be remembered... As someone who created special and unforgettable moments for people.

The Plug... Raymond has created the recipes for Henri Le Worm: The Missing Cookbook app for iPhone and iPad, £2.99. Twitter @HENRILEWORM, www.henrileworm.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Gwyneth Paltrow's new comedy Thanks For Sharing is in cinemas from Friday. Darius from Pop Idol stars in From Here To Eternity at London's Shaftesbury Theatre. And Mercury Prize nominee Laura Mvula starts a national tour in Edinburgh on Monday



NEXT WEEK

- Sarah Parish on steamy new 60s-set medical drama Breathless
- Rachel Khoo's favourite dishes from a mouthwatering trip round France
- Meet the winners of our National Garden Competition
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings