The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it’s chef Antony Worrall Thompson.

The prized possession you value above all others... My collection of antique cookbooks. I have about 400 dating back to the 1500s at my home near Henley.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not seeing my two boys – Blake, 32, and Sam, 30 – from my second marriage grow up. I separated from their mother when they were two and one and they grew up in Australia.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Buying clothes on impulse for my wife Jay. I’m good at choosing for her, but it gets expensive and sometimes she says, ‘I’m not a teenager you know!’

The unending quest that drives you on... Giving pleasure to people with food and service.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... A Passage To India by EM Forster. My grandparents lived there before Partition. Forster brilliantly evokes the country in those days.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I’d witness a heart transplant operation. What are the surgeons thinking when they take out the old heart and put a new one in?

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Criticism of the NHS. It’s put under intolerable strain, not least with immigration. We should be more proud of it.

The figure from history for whom you’d most like to buy a pie and a pint... Boudicca. She was ballsy to take on the Romans; she’d be a good role model.

The film you can watch time and again... Blue Velvet. A psychological horror story that takes the mickey out of the underlying weirdness of American society.

The person who has influenced you most... Jay. She’s changed me from being an introvert who didn’t really like people to someone with a bit of charisma and personality.

The piece of wisdom you’d pass onto a child... The people that matter don’t mind, and the people who mind don’t matter.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Flower arranging. I find it very peaceful to collect wild flowers and make something beautiful with them.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could get back... Something beautiful with them.

The poem that touches your soul... The Irish writer Michael Feeney Calahan’s collection of poems called Fifty Fingers. They’re full of pain and love.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... I made a fool of myself with women.

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