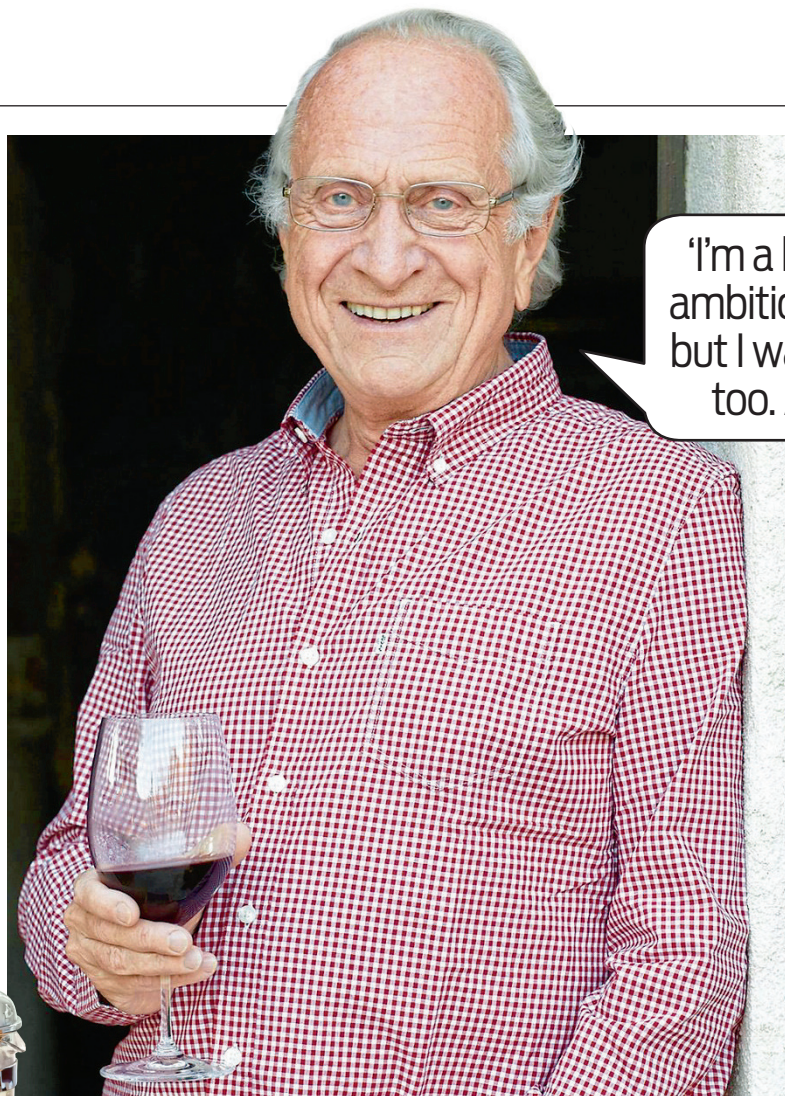


The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's chef Michel Roux Sr's turn



'I'm a baritone and it was my ambition to be an opera singer, but I wanted to be a great chef too. At 26 I had to choose'

have poached eggs with asparagus, followed by lamb. My contribution would be a raspberry soufflé, which I know she likes. I'd then take a balloon flight along the Côte d'Azur in the south of France to my home near St Tropez and play tennis and pétanque with my children and seven grandchildren, aged between two and 26. After that I'd drive to Monaco with Robyn in a vintage Bentley for a cocktail and to play roulette, before flying to New York. We'd have dinner at Thomas Keller's three Michelin star restaurant Per Se and I'd end the day with a cognac at the Brandy Library, a bar in the city.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To be an opera singer. I'm a baritone and it was my dream to sing on stage but I wanted to be one of the best chefs in the world too. When I was 26 I had to choose.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Be tough but fair... but not too fair!

The order of service at your funeral... I want a big party at my St Tropez home. I have over 3,000 bottles of wine in the cellar, so the guests will enjoy themselves! I want my ashes buried next to my mother's on a hill nearby.

The way you want to be remembered... As a teacher and a mentor.

The Plug... My new restaurant and bar Le Miedzor is at Crans-Montana, Switzerland. Visit miedzor.ch. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

The prized possession you value above all others... An 1841 first edition of *Le Pâtissier Royal Parisien* by Antonin Carême, a 19th-century chef who worked for British royalty, the tsar of Russia and the Rothschild family. He was the first cook to turn food into art.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not spending more time with my children [Christine, 52, Francine, 50, and Alain, 48] when they were growing up because I was so devoted to my work. I'm lucky because we're very close now.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Saying yes to work, especially travelling around the world doing promotion. I'll be 75 this month but I overdo it.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...

Joan of Arc – I love strong women and she led an army to victory when she was just 18.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Politicians who talk as if they're experts when in fact they know nothing.

The film you can watch time and time again... *Chariots Of Fire*. I love the story and the music gives me goosebumps!

The book that holds an everlasting resonance...

Charles de Gaulle's *Discours Et Messages*. It has all his speeches from 1940 to 1969. He was a great leader who put his country first.

The person who has influenced you most... My mother Germaine, who inspired my love of cooking. I was one of four children, but our father abandoned us when I was eight and she had to do everything. We had very little food, but she could make a lovely dish with a few ingredients – the mark of a great chef. She died in 2003 aged 91.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Be true to yourself and never try to be someone else.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Wine-making – I'm passionate about the moment of vinification, when the fruit actually turns into wine. It's ethereal and unique.

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

The ability to ski fast. At my age I can't be so crazy so I take my time and enjoy the view.

The poem that touches your soul...

I find Churchill's speeches as inspiring as poetry. I quote him to students in our Roux Scholarship programme: 'Success is not final, failure is not fatal. It's the courage to continue that counts.'

The unending quest that drives you on... To keep aiming for perfection, especially in my cooking.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm a 'celebrity chef'. What does 'celebrity' mean? I don't go to parties or premieres.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd love to be an astronaut and float around the International Space Station.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Going to work for the Rothschild family aged 22. For six years I travelled the world and cooked for world leaders and famous people.



Left: Joan of Arc. Above right: fresh fruit and coffee. Far right: a space shuttle and the International Space Station



PHOTOGRAPHS: LISA UNDER, ALAMY, ALUSTAR, SHUTTERSTOCK/DENIS TABLER, GETTY

PS...

*Charlize Theron and Chris Hemsworth return in **The Huntsman**: Winter's War – in cinemas from Monday. **Sunset Boulevard** starring Glenn Close is on at the London Coliseum until 7 May. And **All Saints'** first album for ten years, **Red Flag**, is out on Friday*



NEXT WEEK

- Bill Oddie's chirpy guide to British birds
- A second helping of delicious dishes from the National Trust cook book
- How to grow the tastiest spuds ever, by Monty Don
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide