We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's the turn of TV chef Ainsley Harriott

The biggest regret you wish you could
The pet hate that makes your hackles amend... Not learning my mum Peppy's recipes. She died in 1993 from pancreatic cancer when she was 65. She inspired me to cook, but she just threw in handfuls of this and that – I wish I'd measured out her ingredients.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Playing the online card game Spider Solitaire on the computer. I can easily lose two or three hours, which isn't ideal if you have stuff to do.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings, Mava Angelou's extraordinary autobiography about overcoming racism in America. It helped me identify with my culture and ancestry.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd listen to world leaders in private. Are they really trying to help others, or are they just making their own countries rich?

The unending quest that drives you on... To make others feel happy

and inspired.

Right: The Incredibles. Above right: Ainsley's treasured toy Puda. Far right: the Green Monkey golf course in Barbados

rise... A disorganised dishwasher! My kids live with me [Ainsley and his

wife are amicably divorced] and I'm always shouting, "Who put this in here like that?'

The prized possession you value above all others...

My chipmunk cuddly toy called Puda, which was my mum's name for me. I've had him since I was a baby and at some point I bit his nose off. He's worn and fragile now, but he's still my comfort toy.

The film you can watch time and time

again... The Incredibles. I love the story, the colours, the music – it makes me happy because it's about family.

> influenced you most... Clifford Walker, a Jamaican chef at Verrey's restaurant in London's Regent Street, where I trained when I was 17. He was a disciplinarian who put me under pressure and gave me all the awful jobs. It was a thorough training and I learned so much.

The person who has

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

pint... Muhammad Ali. As a black kid growing up I felt proud of what he stood for and achieved.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on toachild... People will forget what you said and what you did, but they'll never forget how you made them feel. That's a quote from Maya Angelou.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Classical music. My dad Chester, who died in 2013, was a pianist who played classical music to switch off. It must have got into me as I've always got Classic FM on.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The ability to ski down a black run without stopping. I'm 59 now and the fear factor means I make about ten stops!

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm Lenny Henry and he's me! We had a laugh about it last year. People say to him, 'Ooh, we like a bit of that, don't we?' and to me they're always saying, 'Are you staying in the Premier Inn?'

The poem that touches your soul... ${\rm I}$

like the Tennessee Williams quote, 'Kill my demons and my angels might die too.' No one's perfect – you'd lose something of yourself if you were.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Doing Radio 5 Live's More Nosh, Less Dosh in 1993. I'd been spotted when I was head chef at Lord's cricket ground. It led me to TV work, which changed everything.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd drive through the Variable Speed Limit on motorways at 180mph. I've got too many points on my licence from cameras when the roads are empty.

The song that means most to you... I've Got Life by Nina Simone always makes me get up and go.

The way you would spend

vour fantasy 24 hours. with no travel restrictions... I'd wake up in a hotel in Barbados with my girlfriend at sunrise, and have exotic fruits for breakfast. Then I'd play golf with my son Jimmy, 26, at the Green Monkey

golf course on the island, stopping for saltfish cakes and a rum punch. I'd go skiing in Lech, Austria, before having a beer in a bar at the foot of the mountain. Then I'd go to Fes, Morocco, for a hammam massage. I'd nip back to England to take my Labrador Bobby for a walk, then watch Arsenal win a game 5-0 at the Emirates with my daughter Maddie, 23. I'd have turbot for dinner with mates at the Four Seasons Hotel in New York, before going to Ibiza with my family to dance under the stars.

'People often think I'm Lenny Henry and that he's me. They always say to me, "Are you staying in the Premier Inn?"

> The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Watching Arsenal win the Double with a last-gasp goal against Liverpool in 1989. I was ecstatic.

> The saddest time that shook your world... My mum's death. She always encouraged me and I know she'd have been proud of my career.

> The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To get a ten from Len Goodman on Strictly!

> The philosophy that underpins your life... Share a smile with people.

> The order of service at your funeral... I'll leave the details to my loved ones, but I hope it'll be joyous and uplifting.

> The way you want to be remembered... He brought love and happiness.

> **The Plug...** Ainsley is a judge at the British Takeaways Awards at The Savoy tomorrow. Visit thebtas.co.uk. And he'll appear in the Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special on BBC1 on Christmas Day.

As told to Rob McGibbon



Jennifer Aniston stars in comedy The Office Christmas Party – in cinemas from Wednesday. Paul O'Grady and Amanda Holden open in the London Palladium's panto Cinderella on Friday.

And Neil Young's new album Peace Trail is released the same day



 Monty Don shows you how to turn your garden into a haven for wildlife

NEXT WEEK

Britain's best TV guide