

From top: A salt beef bagel, Babington House, an Angel Jackson bag, Delia's Complete Illustrated Cookery Course, Bathers' Pavilion in Sydney, a Côte de Provence rosé, American Graffiti and Prince Albert

The prized possession you value above all others...

The basement kitchen at my home in north London. I designed it when my husband Dan [Australian actor Daniel Lapaine] and I gutted the house in 2006. It's where I'm happiest.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend...

Not spending more on my wedding in 2001! My dad, Bev, always said he'd pay for a big wedding, but when it came to it I was really frugal and it came in at £10,000. I could easily have nailed Dad for £100,000.

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

I'd have a bagel with salt beef for breakfast with Dan outside Tiffany on 5th Avenue in New York, where we got engaged. Then we'd fly with the kids – Parker, ten, and Sonny, six – to Balmoral beach in Sydney. We'd have grilled fish for lunch at the Bathers' Pavilion restaurant there and then head to the South of France where my first stop would be at a supermarket. They're incredible – each one is like Harrods Food Hall. We'd have an early supper at Club 55 in St Tropez with a huge plate of frites and a bottle of Côte de Provence rosé wine. We'd end the day at Babington House hotel in Somerset.

The temptation you wish you could resist...

Handbags. I buy five to ten a year and currently have about 50. I'm particularly into Angel Jackson bags.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance...

Delia Smith's Complete Illustrated Cookery Course. It was given to me in my 20s and I still use it.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day...

I'd be a fly on the wall at my kids' school.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...

Drivers not obeying the 'two chevrons spacing' rule on motorways. I feel like I'm the only person in the country who bothers.

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

American Graffiti from 1973, which is a classic coming-of-age movie about a group of teenagers in 1960s America. I watched it as an incredibly uncool 13-year-old and fell in love with one of the stars, Paul Le Mat.

The person who has influenced you most...

My late grandmother, Ivy Winepress Forster. My parents divorced when I was two and I was brought up in two families. My grandmother was a bridge between both worlds – and she made amazing pastry.



'I'm a compulsive room painter. I can decide to change a colour at 9pm and start rolling right away'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week: actress and food author Fay Ripley

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

Prince Albert. He did so much for our country in terms of its buildings, parks and culture. He was only 42 when he died. I'd like to know what his ambitions would have been if he'd lived longer.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...

Be a citizen of the world and care as much for a neighbour who lives 1,000 miles away as one who lives down the street.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...

I'm a compulsive room painter. I can decide to change a colour at 9pm and start rolling right away.

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

A jewellery box containing all the gifts for my christening, including gold sovereign coins, a watch and a gold bracelet. When I was 18 and moving into my first flat I left the door open and someone nipped in and stole it.

The unending quest that drives you on...

To bake, to eat, to share.

The poem that touches your soul...

She Is Gone by David Harkins. It tells you that you can smile and live on by remembering the people you lose.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...

That I'm a Northerner! Everyone always expects me to speak in a Mancunian accent because of Jenny from Cold Feet, but I was brought up in Surrey.

The event that altered the course of your life and character...

Getting the job on Cold Feet in 1996. Until then my TV career had been limited to playing unnamed prostitutes.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...

I'd stay at the finest hotels and never pay the bill.

The song that means most to you...

One Big Family by Templecloud. I put it on loudly while I'm cooking and insist the kids dance with me.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever...

Beating Gordon Ramsay in a blind tasting of our chocolate brownies in the F Word TV show in 2009.

The saddest time that shook your world...

Suffering two miscarriages at three months in between my two children. It was a really nasty shock.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...

To run a food business like a restaurant or a shop.

The philosophy that underpins your life...

Give a damn about someone else and they will give a damn about you.

The order of service at your funeral...

I want to be cremated on a bonfire in the country with a service that makes everybody cry. I want some Samuel Barber classical music, but then Get Happy by Judy Garland. There will be a huge cake with a figure of me on top, and a goodie bag for everyone.

The way you want to be remembered...

For my Bakewell tart!

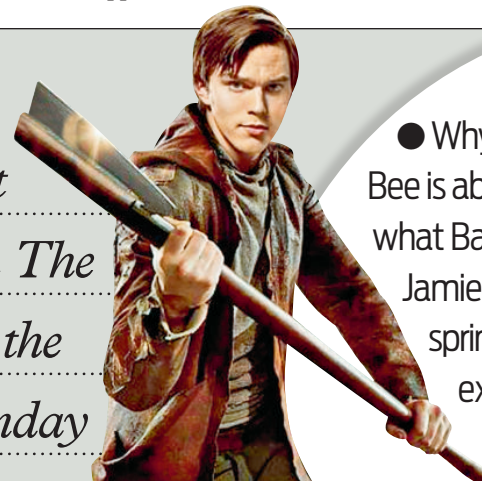
The Plug...

Fay is the ambassador for Bacon Connoisseurs Week, starting Monday, celebrating great Red Tractor Bacon. Visit www.lovepork.co.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Nicholas Hoult updates an old fairy tale in *Jack The Giant Slayer* – in cinemas from Friday. Henry Goodman opens in *The Winslow Boy* at London's Old Vic. And a deluxe edition of the *Les Misérables* soundtrack, with 22 extra tracks, is out Monday



NEXT WEEK

- Why The Great British Sewing Bee is about to do for needlework what Bake Off did for baking
- Jamie Oliver's luscious ways with spring lamb
- Monty Don's expert guide to lawns
- Britain's best TV listings