The Definite Article

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

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The 19th-century French chef Alexis Soyer, who was the first celebrity chef. He was drafted in to feed the British Army during the Crimean War and he transformed how it was done and made soldiers proper food.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Life's like a bank account. You can only take out what you put in.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Cutting the grass in the fields at our home. I love nothing more than getting on the tractor mower with Denver and keeping it nice. It's a bit sad.

The poem that touches your soul... If by Rudyard Kipling is a classic.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... I hate being labelled a ‘celebrity chef’ because it's often used by people who don’t think you can actually cook.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Staging a business partner in 1999. It was stressful, but I had to stand up for myself. I won.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When Fern kidnapped me in 1998! One Friday after filming Ready Steady Cook, she pulled up in her car and said, 'Get in!' She drove me to her house and we had a fantastic weekend.

The saddest time that shook your world... The day in 2007 when I was 31 and he gave me a romantic lunch at a restaurant on the island of Torcello across the lagoon in Venice. I’d have risotto primavera with lovely spring vegetables and a cold bottle of pinot grigio. In the afternoon, we’d go for a walk along Constantine Bay in Cornwall with Denver, then we’d have a few margaritas in the Elephant Bar at Raffles Hotel in Phnom Penh in Cambodia. For dinner we’d have a slap-up Indian meal at the Oberoi Hotel in Delhi. I’d have a few Tiger beers and end the day at home in Buckinghamshire with the family asleep upstairs while I watch Match Of The Day.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People not saying thank you.

The priority activity if you were the invisible man for a day... I’d help the goalkeeper at White Hart Lane and Tottenham would beat Arsenal 6-0.

The film you can watch time and time again... The Magnificent Seven. Steve McQueen is so cool in it.

The person who has influenced you most... The chef Keith Floyd. I met him when I was 31 and he gave me two bits of advice. ‘If you’re on TV and you start thinking it’s real, you’re in trouble,’ and ‘You don’t get the sack in TV – they just stop calling you.’

The single item you would take from our Dream Kitchen contest... I’d want a relaxed affair, with no one in the order of service at your funeral... and be happy with your lot.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I’m not driven by ambitions and never plan anything.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Work hard, be nice to people and be happy with your lot.

The myth people believe about the way you live... I’d pour a bucket of pig slurry over a couple of paparazzi who gave Fern a hard time when she left This Morning in 2009. The song that means most to you... Living In The Past by Jethro Tull. Hearing that for the first time was the moment I discovered music.

The greatest regret you wish you could amend... That I never learnt a language.

The person you would most like to meet... Mike told me he had skin cancer.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... If by Rudyard Kipling is a classic.

The person who has influenced you most... The British Army during the Crimean War.

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