



From top: Torcello near Venice, a margarita and a tractor mower. Below: Keith Floyd and a scone with clotted cream



Above: Living In The Past by Jethro Tull. Right: Steve McQueen in The Magnificent Seven

The prized possession you value above all others... Denver, my black Labrador. He goes everywhere with me.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... That I never learnt a language. At school I just wanted to cook.

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

I'd spend the day with Fern [his wife, TV presenter Fern Britton], starting with croissants and coffee at the quay-side in St Tropez. Then we'd arrive at Buttermilk mountain in Aspen to ski with our kids [their daughter Winnie, 12, and – from Fern's first marriage – twins Jack and Harry, 20, and Grace, 16]. Just the two of us would then have 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 temptation you wish you could resist... Rodda's Cornish Clotted Cream on scones. It's 60 per cent fat!

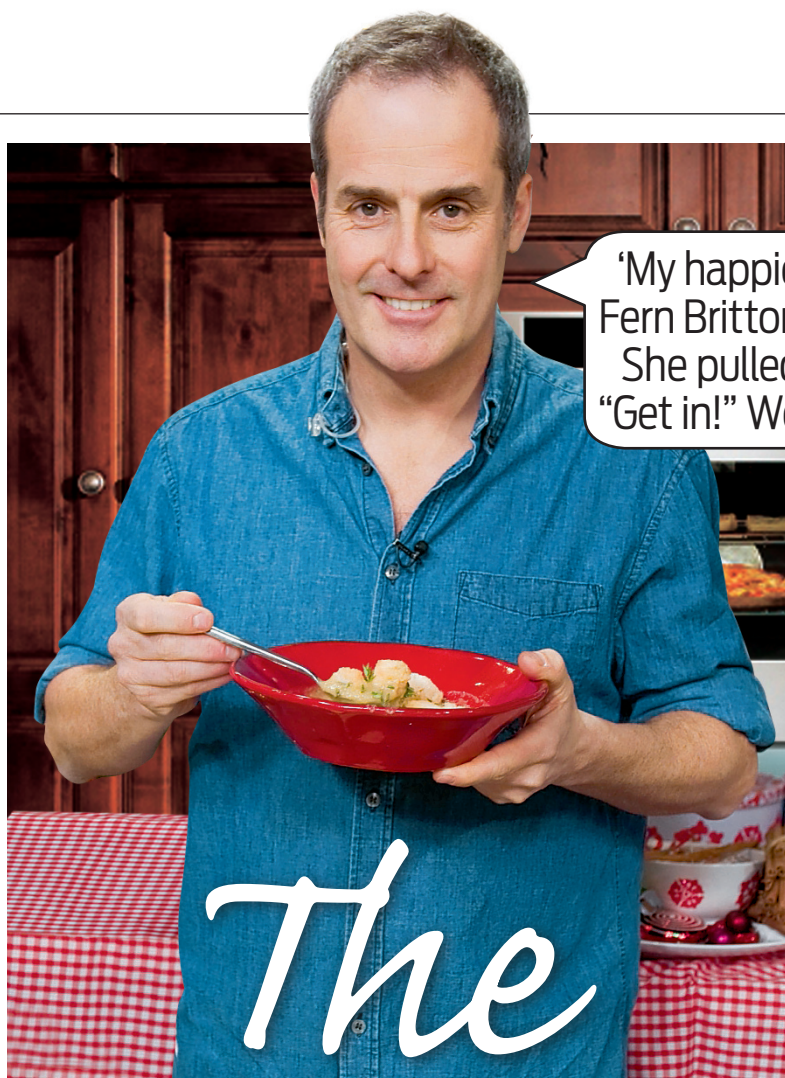
The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Warne's Everyday Cookery from 1936. I was 11 when the caretaker at school gave me a copy. That book put me on the path to my catering career. I still have it.

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

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.'



'My happiest moment was when Fern Britton kidnapped me in 1998. She pulled up in her car and said, "Get in!" We had a great weekend!'

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 treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A pair of red 'board' shorts I bought in Australia when I was 23 – I learnt to surf in them.

The unending quest that drives you on... To never be bored.

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... Suing a business partner in 1999. It was stressful, but I had to stand up for myself. I won.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... 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 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 my brother Mike told me he had skin cancer. Thankfully he's now got the all-clear.

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 order of service at your funeral... I'd want a relaxed affair, with no one in black. I'd leave £500 behind the bar because some of my friends are quite tight. They can have *one* drink on me!

The way you want to be remembered... As a nice bloke who could cook a bit.

The Plug... Phil is working with Breville Creative Kitchen to encourage the nation to get creative with cooking. See www.brevillecreativekitchen.co.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Colin Firth and Nicole Kidman's PoW tale *The Railway Man* is in cinemas from Friday. *The Perfect Murder* with Les Dennis kicks off a UK tour in Dartford. And Maroon 5 are on the road too, starting in Birmingham on Wednesday



NEXT WEEK

- Makeover madness comes to TV with The Great Interior Design Challenge
- Jamie Oliver bakes traditional British biscuits
- Monty Don on how gardeners can cope with a wet winter
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings