

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's *MasterChef* host John Torode



'I love flying big hefty kites. I like to feel the power of the wind, and the sense you're going to be lifted into the air'

The prized possession you value above all others... My Condor bicycle. It's hand-made specially to fit me. I eat a lot for my job so I cycle to stop getting fat.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Opening my first restaurant, Pasta Connection, in Melbourne when I was 20. I should have learned more about business before I took that step, but I was a total donkey. It went bust in a year.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Puff pastry. I love pasties, sausage rolls and especially Aussie meat pies with tomato ketchup.

The film you can watch time and time again... *Crocodile Dundee*. It's corny but also brilliant and funny.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *To Kill A Mockingbird*. I read it when I was 14 and it was an eye-opener.

It was like voyeurism into another world.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd just sit on the beach and relax.

That's one of my favourite things, but these days it's impossible without someone asking for a selfie with me.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People making a hash of expensive ingredients. I find waste abhorrent.

The person who has influenced you most... John Dench, the chef at Tsindos Bistro in Melbourne where I did my apprenticeship. He taught me how to cook, clean and how to listen.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... HG Wells. I'd love to know how he managed to come up with such amazing ideas for his stories.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Blow your own trumpet, otherwise someone will use it as a spittoon! My dad taught me that.

The poem that touches your soul... I like Ogden Nash because he's funny. 'The cow is of bovine ilk; One end is moo, the other is milk.' Fabulous!



The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Flying big hefty kites. I have one 9m long. I like to feel the power of the wind and that sense you're going to be lifted into the air.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm gruff.

I'm blunt on *MasterChef* because there's no point wasting time with platitudes. But off the telly, I'm pretty nice.

The unending quest that drives you on... To never stop learning about food.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A St Christopher medal that I lost last year. Lisa [his girlfriend, actress Lisa Faulkner] gave me a new one and I keep it close.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd get rid of traffic jams and bad drivers in London.

The song that means most to you... *Gold* by Spandau Ballet reminds me of driving to the beach when I was 18, singing it at the top of my lungs.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... My mother dying [Ann died from a heart condition when she was 31]. I was four at the time and I don't remember it, but my two brothers and I moved away from Dad to be brought up by my grandmother. Nanna was wonderful and I had an idyllic childhood. I have a few memories of my mum but I'm not sure if they're real or if I constructed them later when I was a kid. I visit her grave every time I'm back in Australia.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd spend all day with Lisa and my kids [two boys aged 19 and 17 from his first marriage, and a son, ten, and a daughter, eight, from his second]. I'd begin with a swim on Manly beach in Sydney, followed by coffee and toasted banana bread in a cafe. I'd ski in Courchevel and have lunch at the Bel Air restaurant on the slopes. I'd have salad and steak-frites with mustard and good red wine. I'd spend the rest of the day chilling out on the Phi Phi islands in Thailand with the family. I'd get fish from the market and cook for everyone while I have a few cold Singha beers. The day would end with a swim in the sea at night as the water glows with phosphorescence.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Going to the beach in Australia as a teenager, sailing a boat, and hanging out with mates are the happiest moments I've had.

The saddest time that shook your world... I was upset when my Nanna died when I was 18, but she was 77, so I was prepared for it. I'm not sure I've had particularly sad times.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To do slalom water-skiing on one ski. I'd love to zip in between the buoys at full stretch, but at 49 I'm too old and afraid to do it.

The philosophy that underpins your life... In life, you get back what you put in. Put in a lot and a lot comes back. Give little, then very little comes back.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd want a very simple church service with people bellowing out hymns, like *Bread Of Heaven*. I'm undecided about burial or cremation, but I want to end up next to my mum in Morpeth, Australia.

The way you want to be remembered... There's no need to remember me. I'll be happy to just fade away.

The Plug... John has partnered with hot drinks machine Tassimo as one of their Perfect Host panel, to help teach people how to host the ideal gathering. Visit www.tassimo.co.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: CAMERA PRESS; REX; CORBIS; ALAMY



Left: Paul Hogan in *Crocodile Dundee*. Above, right: A kite. Far right: Phi Phi Lee island, Thailand

PS...

*Martin Freeman returns as Bilbo Baggins in **The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies**, in cinemas from Friday. Festive comedy **The Shoemaker's Holiday** is at Stratford's Swan Theatre from Thursday. And Lenny Kravitz plays a one-off show at Wembley Arena tonight*



NEXT WEEK

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- Monty Don on the magic of holly
- Britain's best TV listings