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# The Gentleman Baker

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Monday, 26 August 2013

## Respected, revered and admired - Eric Lanlard



One of the (many) things I love about baking is the sheer variety of treats, pleasures and gratifications that can be created with relatively modest ingredients and straightforward processes. From the serious, precise and deeply considered, to the frivolous fanciful and whimsical, there really is an endless array of options available to even the novice baker. If you've never baked before there is no better time to have a go and you only need to take a stroll to your local bookshop to find a near encyclopaedic range of resources, created by skilled, expert bakers and aimed at educating, assisting and inspiring.

One such master is Eric Lanlard. An award winning pâtissier and author, he has worked with some of the most distinguished names in gastronomy and provided beautiful baking to a supremely high profile clientele. His books are not only an excellent guide, with everything from simple techniques to specialist skills, but an interesting and entertaining read with sumptuous photography and recipes created with passion and expertise.

Recently Eric was kind enough to answer a few quick questions about his thoughts on baking, his inspirations and influences. Here's what he had to say...

*You've worked with some of the most highly regarded chefs and restaurants in the world. Who has been the single biggest influence on your career?*

I have worked with some really generous and inspirational people in my career and it's hard to pick out just one person. I came to London and worked with the Roux brothers and became their head pastry chef for their production kitchen. I was only 22 at the time but they recognised something in me and were incredibly supportive. I worked for them for five years and then opened my own business. We are still in touch today - they were mentors and now they are friends.

*What inspires you?*

Travel, ingredients, art - everything and anything. I travel lots in my work and in my personal life and I spend a lot of time eating! I enjoy discovering ingredients, flavours and recipes.

*How do you come up with new recipes and cake ideas?*

I think one of the things that I love about my work is that it is very creative. I am passionate about what I do so I rarely switch off and am always thinking about new recipes and ideas - that's the artist in me.

*You have made cakes for a very varied and high profile clientele. What has been the most unusual cake request you have had and what request has been the biggest challenge?*

The most unusual cake request has been someone wanted a dog cake to commemorate their deceased pet.

*Is there any request you've had to turn down?*

Yes I have but it was too rude I'm not at liberty to say who and what owing to discretion.

*You seem to revel in the seductive and sexy side of cakes. Why for you are cakes just so cheeky?*

Cakes to me are for any occasion but ultimately they are celebratory and glamorous. I got to express the cheeky side of my personality through my Cox, Cookies & Cake cupcake book. Beautiful looking and tasty cakes - what could be more sexy than that?

*What is your favourite sweet treat?*

I don't have a sweet tooth - thank goodness - my guilty pleasure is cheese - I adore it - particularly French cheese. For those rare times when I have a sweet craving it would be ambrosia creamed rice pudding eaten out of the tin.

*What cake should everyone learn to bake?*

Everyone should learn how to make pastry once you master it it's so easy and quick to make and you can't beat the taste of home-made pastry. Everyone should learn how to bake a classic sponge cake it's a great one to have in your repertoire. You can then vary the recipe, chocolate, lemon, coffee, vanilla and glam them up for a special occasion.

*What do you see as the next big trend in baking?*

Savoury baking - pies and tarts has had a renaissance. Chocolate is now having its time - it's such a versatile and beautiful ingredient in which to bake with.

*What single piece of advice would you give to home bakers?*

Follow the recipe - baking is a science - check that your oven temperature is correct - using an oven thermometer. Use quality ingredients for first-class baking results. My favourite ingredients are golden caster sugar, unsalted butter and Nielsen Massey vanilla extract.

*Eric's latest book Chocolat is published by Mitchell Beazley. For more information please visit [www.cake-boy.com](http://www.cake-boy.com)*