

* Eric Lanlard's secret is out

“Give me a platter of cheese and charcuterie any day”



While the French master patissier is best known for his baking, Eric Lanlard admits he's actually a bit of a savoury boy at heart

Who would you most like to bake for?

Catherine Deneuve. For me, she represents what France is about. She's elegant, looks fabulous and has good taste.

Are you a good host?

Yes, everybody knows that! I get it

from my mum and my grandmother, who always pushed the boat out: the best china, silver and linen. And the wine always flows – it's a challenge to have an empty glass in my house. I want everyone to have a good time.

Are your tastes sweet or savoury?

Funnily enough for a pastry chef, I've never really had a sweet tooth. Give me a platter of cheese and charcuterie any day.

On a scale of one to 10, how tough are you?

Nine and a half. Very tough. I can put on a brave face – even if I'm really suffering, you wouldn't know. But at home I can be a complete wuss!

How do you keep fit?

I go to the gym and also do Pilates. Nigella Lawson recommended it and I love it... Well, to be honest, it's not something you enjoy – in fact you can't wait for the hour to be over. I pretend I'm not in pain, but it really hurts! But I don't want you to think of me in a room full of Lycra-clad women – there are a few men in the class, too.

Do you ever feel the pressure and throw pans round the kitchen?

Being a pastry chef is pretty different to being a restaurant chef, where food has to come out on time. We have orders, obviously, but it is a more relaxed atmosphere – no

blazing flames and so on. I rarely lose my temper, and when I do it's usually because somebody has annoyed me. But my staff know to look for the signs of me getting cross – apparently my ears start to turn very red.

What do you like about being the age you are now?

Sometimes I feel grown up, a bit wiser in the decisions I make and the way I behave. But sometimes I completely forget that I'm 44 and act like an 18-year-old instead. So I have to remind myself of my age, when I'm going out and – more tragically – in what I choose to wear.

Do you have a philosophy?

Act in the moment. I make the most of everything. I think you should be happy right to the centre – there's no point doing something that doesn't make you feel that way. Otherwise my ears turn red...

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“If I didn't work in food I'd be... A cab driver. I would have been a brilliant cabbie. I'm a Londoner through and through and know all the quick routes. And if I hadn't been so naughty at school, a barrister of criminal law.”

Chef and author Allegra McEvedy

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