

WAITROSE & PARTNERS
LIFE ON A PLATE
SEASON 1, EPISODE 3: TOM KERRIDGE

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SPEAKERS

Tom Kerridge, Jimi Famurewa, Alison Oakervee

Jimi 00:00

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Welcome to Life on a Plate, the brand-new podcast from Waitrose, in which we talk to some very special guests about what food really means to them. We ask about their comfort foods and favourite dishes, their food memories and even their kitchen disasters. By the end of each episode, you'll know a lot more about them. My name is Jimi Famurewa and joining me is my co-host Alison Oakervee. Waitrose food editor and kitchen genius. Alison, I have got something that I want to talk about straight away today. And that is lemon drizzle cake. You sent me a lemon drizzle cake, which I was not expecting at all and it was incredible. I should probably like, build tension as if we're on a baking show and sort of wait to give you my verdict, but yeah, thank you so much. That was, that was unbelievable. Why lemon drizzle?

Alison 02:13

Do you know what? It has become a bit of a calling card. I've got a bit of reputation for my lemon drizzle cake. And the great thing about last year and lockdown was I just started randomly sending them to people and I just wanted to make them and pop them in the post.

Jimi 02:26

That is incredible. That's amazing. I really loved it. It was very lemony, and I think you maybe put that on a card or maybe you said in an email, 'I hope you like lemony-lemon drizzle cakes', and I appreciated that, it was really, really good. And of course, now I'm just going to be angling for more of them - I'm sort of just hoping that, you know, you can just drop some round, start a subscription service.

Alison 02:52

The guy in the post office... It was so funny because they're frozen and really cold when I post them. And they always go: 'What's in here?', and I go: 'It's a cake', and the guy knows me now because I've posted so many. And he saw your address and he just went: 'Why don't you take it there? It's probably quicker'. [Laughs] Because you're just around the corner.

Jimi 03:08

Yeah, this is a good point. Because we live quite close to each other don't we? So yeah, I mean, I'll take an oven fresh sort of warm one next time, if you just want to run it round. What is the secret to your lemon drizzle cake? Just before we get off lemon drizzle.

Alison 03:23

Lots of lemons.

Jimi 03:24

Ah, okay. How many?

Alison 03:25

I think that one – probably depends on how juicy they are, and what time of year it is. So I think that one probably had about three or four lemons. So it is lots of lemon juice, lots of zest. Sometimes a slug of limoncello.

Jimi 03:41

Oh, fantastic. Yeah, yeah. This sounds great. And I could, I could talk about this all day, but we should get down to business and business this episode is our conversation with Tom Kerridge. Tom is an acclaimed award-winning chef, originally from Gloucester. He runs and owns the Hand and Flowers in Marlow, restaurants in Manchester and London, and he's got TV shows, cookbooks, he's a real hero of the food world and a real champion of British food. What did you make of Tom?

Alison 04:24

I really liked him. I really got a sense that for him, it wasn't all about money and prestige. But it's all about great foods and looking after people. And he really cares about you know, as he called it, his band of pirates, other people that he works with. You know, it's very much like us at work in that partners matter and people matter. So it was just that nice kind of similarity between us and him.

Jimi 04:47

I think he really balances quite a sort of earthy, kind of common touch and he is a real champion of that every day, and British, and he talks about wanting to cook in pubs. Because it was where we felt comfortable, and it's where a lot of people feel comfortable and they have that kind of warm welcome.

But he marries that with such incredible technique and ability as a chef. Hand and Flowers book came out late last year, and it's a really, really incredible book and a real celebration of what he does. And as you say, yeah, he's, he's all about looking after people and all about kind of taking in people into a kitchen atmosphere that didn't feel like they fit in anywhere else, and yeah, he was a real joy. I had high expectations, but he met them.

Alison 05:37

He did and actually we could have carried on talking for hours with him.

Jimi 05:41

Oh, yeah. I get the sense we could just gab on and on about how great he is but we should just probably crack on with it, shouldn't we?

Alison 05:50

Let's get on with it.

Jimi 05:51

So, without further ado, here is our Life on a Plate conversation with Tom Kerridge.

Tom Kerridge, thank you very much for joining us.

Tom Kerridge 06:12

No worries. Thanks for having us.

Jimi 06:13

I wondered if we could go back to the beginning. What first kind of set you off on the path to becoming a chef, was there a specific lightbulb moment for you?

Tom Kerridge 06:22

It was the moment I walked into a kitchen needing a job washing up to be honest. It was the environment, it was the space, it was the energy that kitchens give, it was that, that was the moment I didn't... it just got to the point where I needed work. So I walked into a kitchen and that was it. It was like I'd found my space, that slightly left field way of life that, you know, removed from society, this kind of like stainless-steel box full of naughty boys and girls that, you know, it's very much like a pirate ship. And I loved it very much.

Alison 06:54

So it didn't nearly go in another direction? It's always been food?

Tom Kerridge 06:59

It's always been food. I mean, there was a little bit in between 16 and 18, where I did a little bit of TV stuff. But it really wasn't the thing for me, it was always going to be in a kitchen. And there's never been anything else that I've ever wanted to do or be a part of, or be around. And now I think as you get older, the world of food, when I've got the ability where you can run pubs and restaurants, and you can speak

to cheese makers and suppliers and people, and you're actually out of the kitchen and you're meeting other equally passionate people about what they do... talking to you guys, you're passionate about food and restaurants, you know, and it's always a lovely thing to do to meet people who just love being in that food arena.

Jimi 07:37

You talk about being attracted to that kind of band of misfits, and this kind of place that people that felt they didn't fit in, found this family and kind of belonging. I'm interested to know, what were your thoughts about the actual food at that point? What did it mean to you? Did you see food as this kind of vehicle for expression? Or was it just about feeding? Was it just about kind of sustenance?

Tom Kerridge 08:00

No, see, I think food has always been... food when you're a chef is... you can get excited by produce and product, but actually, that is something that is almost secondary in the career. Particularly in the early time of being a chef from the age of, I don't know, 18 to 28, those first 10 years are much more about understanding the job, the profession of being a chef, they're keeping your knives sharp, not running out of food, not you know, the building blocks of understanding the trade that you're in, the adrenalin fuelled services, the fire, the knives, the pain, the tiredness – they're all the things that actually make being a chef, really cool, make it really good fun, you have to enjoy the stress levels. But there's many a food writer, there's many a journalist that knows much more about food than chefs. But chefs, we would know how to cook it, we would understand the process. So it doesn't matter if you're looking at, I don't know, slow cooked lamb shoulders somewhere in a North African style, or then something that's cooked in a clay pot in Singapore, or something that's done, I don't know, fermentation or pickling processings that are done somewhere in Scandinavia. As a chef, we would have done that or have an understanding of it, but the actual, the actual product or the produce, it's probably food writers that have a better knowledge.

Jimi 09:26

Yeah, yeah. Maybe sort of broader context because that's the kind of stuff that we focus on. And yeah, but obviously if you put us in a restaurant kitchen, we would crumble and I'm sure you'd probably enjoy watching it.

Tom Kerridge 09:41

Yeah - you might understand what you should be doing with a lamb chop, but actually doing it for 70 people whilst getting shouted out, and someone dropping sauce half way through service, and then, you know, a customer sending something back, or someone then turning up late. Those are all the bits that you have to learn as being a chef. It's all well and good just going, yeah, yeah, I know this produce is actually... Well done, I'm glad you know it, now get it on the plate.

Jimi 10:07

Yeah, yeah, I'm feeling, I'm feeling, I'm feeling seen. I'm feeling exposed suddenly. So let's move on. You seem to have a very clearly defined style of cooking, was that something that you came to by accident? Did you deliberately want to look in pubs because of their democratic way with food? Like,

how did you kind of go on that journey to kind of hitting upon what, what seems to be your identified style really?

Tom Kerridge 10:32

Yeah, it was a place I felt most comfortable. It was a place where I thought, you know, on a day off is where I'm quite happy to be. They're incredibly... they embrace society and people and they're reflective of areas and communities, and they mean so much, and, you know, everybody's welcoming in a pub, you can walk into any country pub anywhere up and down in the country, and get a pint and a warm smile, and something nice to eat, and it really doesn't matter; your economic background, your education, your race, your colour, your sexuality, your... it really doesn't matter. You can go into pubs, and they're welcoming. And that's the most important thing about pubs. Whereas sometimes restaurants can feel a little bit, I suppose sterile, perhaps clinical, perhaps they can lack heart and soul. And that's one thing that pubs have in abundance is heart and soul.

Jimi 11:37

One of the things that you did kind of during the first lockdown was you took a stand in terms of no shows and I think it was Kerridge's Bar and Grill in London, and it was at the time when restaurants had just reopened, it was all very tentative, and people were kind of fearfully stepping back in. You called out some people that hadn't showed up for their table. And there was this huge response. Were you expecting that response? What was it like after the fact of that, because it kind of created this whole national debate?

Tom Kerridge 12:12

It did. It was massive. So I was sat there and I was reading this service report for Kerridge's Bar and Grill and we had 100 people booked and it was the second Saturday of being allowed to be open. So you go, this is, you know, it's great, 100 people booked – it should normally be doing 180. So it's almost 50% down, and you go okay, but we've kind of structured, we understand what the bookings are, and we've made a point of going, okay, but we had something like 26 people no show, you know, if you take that away from your infrastructure, from the food that you've bought, from the staff that you've put in place, and everything that goes in and a quarter of people don't turn up, that's all the profit. I mean, not that you're making any profit anyway, this year, but any opportunity to make any small margin, it's completely disappeared, you're now losing money, there's no point in being open, because these people haven't turned up. And it's not the fact that they haven't turned up. The issue is the fact that they haven't called to say they're not coming. So you go... because if they tell you they're not coming, that's okay, great, we can resell those tables. You sit there with a table waiting for someone to turn up and they just 'no show'. So the shout out that I made, yeah, you're right – and it turns out that it happened to so many people within hospitality that first weekend. I mean, it obviously hit a big nerve, and it picked up a national following, and a lot of people talked about it for a couple of weeks, which was great, because actually what it did do, now, throughout the remainder of the summer, prior to now getting to lockdown, there were very, very little in the way of no shows and lots of other people had very little. I think it made people's conscious feel: 'Oh my God, yeah, of course, I've got to tell people, no, I've got to let them know'. So I think from that point of view it was most definitely worth it. You know, I think it got it out there – it made people address it, and it made members of the general public much more aware that actually the decisions they make will affect other people's lives and livelihoods. There's much more

to it than just going out for steak and chips now. There is actually the decision, if I do or don't go, will affect somebody, who I may never have met before, will affect their life. And that's... and I think for that point of view it is most definitely the right thing to do to throw it out there.

Jimi 14:16

And also just touching on the fact that Hand and Flowers book which came out towards the end of last year. It feels like a bit of a full circle journey for you. Is that what it felt like from your point of view- that it was kind of something that you'd long wanted to do? It's 15 years since you took over the pub?

Tom Kerridge 14:36

Yeah, it is. So, 15 years – 2005 – we opened and then it got to the point where... it was actually the first book deal that we signed, we were going to do a single book, we're going to do kind of, like a Hand and Flowers pub cookbook. And what actually happened is, you know, a *Great British Menu* came along, I did alright in that, and so we kind of shelved the Hand and Flowers cookbook, and then the series did well, and then we were asked to do another one, so we did the second series and another book and a different... And it kind of kept getting pushed back, and we went on this journey of, I think of just being, cooking great food and in the pub, and then being able to find ourselves with a voice, you know, writing bits and bobs for newspapers and, and doing books and appearing on television was something that was really, really cool. So the recipes you wrote were very, very different – they were connecting to people to be able to cook at home, which is very different to the dishes that you cook in the Hand and Flowers. And then I suppose over that period of time, you know, the Hand and Flowers now 15 years down the line, and the way that we've grown and matured as a business, and the way that the food is developed, and changed and become more, I suppose, very, incredibly well-focused, but a little more complex. You then, kind of, it's now more, it's much more a reflective book, and it represents, it's every exact recipe that we cook at the Hand and Flowers, or have cooked at the Hand and Flowers, and... but the kind of, the way that the book is laid out is very much a case of it being that you can break it all down, you can pinch the apple purée from something if you want to make the best apple sauce, or a simple tuile, or, you know, a chocolate mousse, or whatever. Those kinds of recipes are there but when you construct the whole dishes together, it kind of takes you into that two-star level, and it's... so it's trying to... but 15 years down the line has allowed this book to be way better than it was ever going to be because it's now much more of a reflective journey of the people that have been on it in the pub. It's kind of like a slight look back in history of, you know, the development of the business.

Alison 16:32

Before you came, Jimi and I were talking about how good the recipes are, having got them all broken down, and makes it all so much more achievable for people to cook at home. And I think also during lockdown people's cooking abilities, also... it just improved, and people are more ambitious about what they'll take on, so there's some really great recipes in there that I've got my arm doing when I've got a spare weekend.

Tom Kerridge 16:58

Amazing, yeah. I mean, you're right, lockdown has served many, many things: painful, disruptive, heartbreaking, devastating, however, you know there has been more time to be spent with family, there has been more opportunity to cook, there's been more opportunity to read, there's been more

opportunity to do certain things that you're quite often not be a part of, or that your lives are too busy, that you know, to do even simple cookery can quite often... if you're not getting in until nine or 10 o'clock at night because you'd been super busy, or then you socialise with friends, or whatever, the last thing you do is get home and cook. So it's been great from that point of view in terms of people getting into kitchens and having a go at stuff and experimenting, having a bit more time to play around with food, has been you know, it's been one of the positives to take out of this.

Jimi 17:52

I was wondering about your, your philosophy with food and your kind of tastes, how have they kind of evolved over the years and obviously change of lifestyle has been a huge part of your personal journey, and the books that you've published, and the shows that you've done. What would, what would sort of young Tom that was first kind of getting taken to those pubs and growing up in Gloucestershire, what did he think of as comfort food and the, you know the height of luxury, and what do you think of now? How has your food taste changed?

Tom Kerridge 18:24

I mean I grew up from a single parent family in Gloucester, my mum had two jobs, I went to an all-boys comprehensive school in the middle of three council estates. So it was a... the luxury of eating out and food, it was very, very... well, it was few and far between, but it wasn't because... it was just a world that I'd never known or experienced. So, you know to go to a Bernie Inn when I was little, as a birthday celebration was always something that was seen as luxury or exciting or, you know, that moment of going out was absolutely brilliant. But for me, I suppose the comfort foods basis is always going to be like your mum's Sunday lunch, and everyone will always say that their mum's Sunday lunch is the best. But yeah, it would be my mum's Sunday lunch – was great, you know, and I'd play rugby on a Sunday, and then come back to the house, and quite often I'd bring three or four friends, waifs and strays from the rugby pitches. So you know, my background is... it's very, very normal for where I grew up. There were loads of kids who grew up with single parents, it wasn't such a strange thing. I was no different to anybody else. But the one thing that my mum did was always good hospitality, and she would never... she was never judgmental of any of the other kids, whether they were the naughtiest boys in school, or whether they were, you know, whose parents were, you know, missing in action, or whatever. My mum was always, like, kids are welcome, like – no worries. She'd always do enough roast potatoes and someone would turn up, there'd always be something there for them. So it was always – the comfort food has always been mum's Sunday lunch. Definitely.

Alison 20:02

And what's it now? What would you say the comfort food is now? Is it still Sunday lunch at home with your son?

Tom Kerridge 20:08

Yeah, it is something that is... it's something that is funny, I bumped into a friend who works in the media and in Marlow, last Sunday, and he was coming over Marlow bridge as I was going the other way into the park with my little man, and he was coming back with his kids on their bikes. And it was just like, well: 'Where are you off to now?', and he said: 'I'm just going home to make my house smell of Sundays'. So like, doing those roast potatoes, and you just go I love the idea of that, that sense of, so

you're right that sense of luxury, of putting something in the oven that makes the house smell of something delicious. That's, that's the height of a treat, and it could be, I don't know, it could be a baked cake, or it could be the Sunday lunch, but for me, it's always something like a slow roast shoulder of lamb, or a casserole, or something like that, that just...just kind of... as you walk through the door you fall into those flavours, and it's just those are the things – yeah, that's comfort food, that's something that's special.

Alison 21:07

What about your son? Do you cook with him? Is he in the kitchen with you?

Tom Kerridge 21:12

Yeah, he does like cooking – he'll be five next month but, like me he's got quite a short attention span. So if we're going to cook, he does something quick. But he's pretty good at cooking an omelette. He's alright at that. He likes cracking eggs. He's alright at making scrambled eggs. He's quite good at having a go at making cakes. He doesn't mind that, but yeah, he's alright at food. He's not bad. He's pretty, he's pretty poor with vegetables, but I don't think there's many five-year-olds that suddenly go: 'Oh yeah, I'd love some kale'. You know, he loves fresh fish, absolutely loves it. But like most kids, he likes beige, you know, kind of like brown, brown and crispy or brown and soft. That's it, yeah.

Jimi 21:56

Yeah, you learn that lesson early where you kind of try to introduce them to loads of stuff and you maybe kind of spend a lot of time cooking something, and they just kind of shove it to the other side of the table and you just think: 'Okay, never again'.

Tom Kerridge 22:09

I tell you what we grew – this is the longest pudding we ever made. We grew a pumpkin, right. So it took us months. We grew a pumpkin. Two Sundays ago, we baked it, we roasted it, we puréed it, and went through the whole process. We made it into pumpkin pie, like rolled the pastry, like everything about it, baked the whole lot. Absolutely. Like it was lovely, right, took a slice of it. He wanted it with some vanilla ice cream. He had the vanilla ice cream, didn't want the pumpkin pie, but I mean, that thing took like four months to make. Just not interested in it, just wanted the vanilla ice cream that came out of a tub.

Jimi 22:48

Kids, kids are the harshest critics of all. I wondered as well about food's capacity to kind of give back, and sort of have a positive impact on people's lives, and you talked a little bit about Meals for Marlow. Can you tell us a bit about that? I mean speaking in the past tense because when this comes out it will have been gone. But could you kind of dig into that a little bit more for us and what you did and the process of putting it together?

Tom Kerridge 23:12

Yeah, it actually still exists, we set up, there was that whole process right at the beginning of that first lockdown of people worrying about the NHS, and what was going on, and we were all clapping on a Thursday night, and there was a little tweet put out from one of the, one of the local hospitals in Slough

to say that their guys were working incredibly hard, you know, they're doing 18 hour shifts, and they're, you know, when they go into the supermarkets, 24-hour supermarkets, that there's no food left, there's nothing there that they need, all the staples have gone, and they're eating out of vending machines. So it was like: 'Okay, so what can we do here? Can we do something special? We've got a load of furloughed staff, we've got a great big unit that works for outside catering that obviously we're not doing any. Is there something we could do?'. So we kind of put a little shout out and set up a GoFundMe page which I set up with a guy that works in marketing, and somebody else that we run the Pub in the Park festival with, and we just went, right, well let's see if we can create a bit of a buzz and get some names together and see if we can get to build a bit of money together, to see if we can do a few meals. And within the first weekend of launching it, we just said: 'Right this is what we're going to do'. It raised £75,000 which was just amazing, and by the end of it, we'd raised over £180,000, and we'd fed over 80,000 meals to frontline NHS in both Slough, Maidenhead, High Wycombe and over in Oxford as well. So, four big hospitals in around our area, but then also the vulnerable and the needy, through a link foundation into people that needed it. And it made such a difference as well that we were dropping off at the church here in Marlow, and they were taking it to the guys that needed it in the areas here, and that community drive was massive.

Jimi 25:00

We touched on it with the pumpkin pie, but what kind of things have you been cooking? Have you been working on stuff, or have you just been cooking as an escape? What have you been getting into throughout this period? What have you been enjoying dabbling with?

Tom Kerridge 25:21

It's just been nice to be able to have a bit of, that little bit of extra time for making stews and minced dishes, you know, chillies and bolognese sauces, and just things that take that little bit longer.

Alison 25:35

And apart from growing your pumpkin, have you been growing anything else out in the back garden?

Tom Kerridge 25:38

Oh, no, no, I'm not the gardener I've got to be honest, I'm not very good. It's not really my thing. I haven't got the time for it, pumpkin is quite easy – basically stuck it in the ground and waited.

Alison 25:53

Was it just one pumpkin seed you planted – you haven't got a whole garden full of pumpkins?

Tom Kerridge 25:57

No, it was a plant and we only got one pumpkin from it so I'm not quite sure how that works. I don't know how many you're supposed to get. It was about all I could manage – that's the only green fingers I've got. One pumpkin.

Alison 26:10

Mind you, you probably did yourself a favour with just one pumpkin because they are a bit like trifids that just take over the whole, the whole back space with the way they grow out.

Tom Kerridge 26:20

Well if anybody needs to grow small amounts of pumpkins really badly they should just ask... that might be my next book: How to grow pumpkins badly.

Jimi 26:31

How to get one...

Alison 26:34

But bake an amazing pumpkin pie. Do you have any midweek recipes that are a go-to that might please the three of you.

Tom Kerridge 26:44

Yeah, we do, omelettes are a big thing in our house, you know... Acey loves the protein, he loves the eggs and they're very good, they're very good staples in our house because they don't take long to cook. But you can also do so much with them. You can go to Spain with the Spanish style tortilla, you can just do like a full English kind of omelette style thing, or you can do... it's a way of using up stuff that's in the fridge. You know, we all have bits of that one slice of ham, or that little one... or those two tomatoes, or that, you know... we're all okay, well what should I? And you kind of chuck it together as a big flavour. So our omelettes, cover it with sriracha sauce it's delicious. It's an easy thing to do. Midweek teas, they're super quick, super simple, super easy.

Alison 27:31

So you put the sriracha on your omelettes to switch it up? Have you got any other essential kitchen ingredients that are kind of go to's that you could recommend?

Tom Kerridge 27:41

Yeah, I mean, they're always kind of like big flavour enhancers. I'm a big fan of English mustard, Colman's English Mustard is like the best thing ever. I love things like gherkins and capers. I love that acidity level that you can throw into dishes, and that just brings things to life, those sort of things are great. Smoked paprika, cracked black pepper, you know, all of those kinds of like, added flavour, like punches that are really hard that don't necessarily sit in a dish. Now - you don't base a dish around English mustard, you don't base a dish necessarily around gherkins or cracked black pepper, but when you throw them into dishes, they suddenly take them to another space, another dimension. So I do like those store cupboard kind of ingredients.

Jimi 28:27

So I can't remember then if you said about it being something that you find calming, and I know that you have obviously been on this transformational journey, and you've taught brilliantly and really relatably about lifestyle changes and things like that, that you've brought in – how have you managed to recreate that buzz? Is it exercise? Is it kind of something else? Like how do you get that little escape?

Tom Kerridge 28:50

It's an active mind, it's keeping doing stuff to the point where I think I can't get it quite done in time, and I quite enjoy that. And then, yeah again, on top of that I do enjoy doing stuff in the gym, yeah I do enjoy trying to push myself to limits. And I do keep thinking at some point I'm just going to go, nah, I just don't want to do any of it anymore. But I don't know when that will be.

Jimi 29:13

But that is interesting. So you don't really seek the quiet solitude – you like the hustle, and the pressure of it?

Tom Kerridge 29:23

Yeah, I love a bit of chaos. That's a big thing that I miss from drinking – like I miss that bit. I don't miss the fall-out from it, but I miss that kind of self-indulged chaos. So trying to create it a little bit, by through workload, or saying yes to stuff that perhaps we shouldn't – I don't mind at all.

Jimi 29:40

I was wondering, in terms of kind of kitchen culture, and it being quite full tilt, and working quite hard, and being sort of quite hard charging. I know you've spoken in the past about Marco Pierre White's book being quite a formative one for you. So, do you think the kitchen culture will change?

Tom Kerridge 30:01

I think it already is, to a point, I think the world of Instagram or social media makes a big, big difference to young chefs coming into the industry because they can see dishes around the world there and then, right now you can see what someone's doing... what Alex Atala is doing in Brazil, or you can see what an amazing three star chef is doing in Tokyo, or somebody is doing amazing in Scandinavia or, you know, you can go... and I think that creates an environment where kitchens are full of people now that want experiences and travel with food and understanding and, and kind of a culture that is much more. Its enriching about... it's a global culture, rather than just these insular four walls, like, being in a submarine kind of, that's where it is, it's now much more outward looking, which is exciting and great for that point of view. I think the hours is something that everybody in the industry is always looking at how we can kind of bring that down. But essentially, the work is, you know, the busiest times are in the evening. The busiest points of it are the weekends, you know, so it is still going to be seen as from the outside as a slightly antisocial world to be in. However, we know once we're in it, it's the most sociable world to be and it's the most amazing, incredible, creative, or, okay you might have to work Saturday night, but you still know where to go Saturday night at one o'clock in the morning. And you still know the best barman that will serve you the best drink, and the guys that will get you in through the back door with no issue – you know, that lifestyle is exceptionally amazing. And it's brilliant, that slightly leftfield way of life is fantastic. And I do think there is part of the reason why people love being a chef is not about the food. It is about the energy that you get from being in kitchens, the excitement, the adrenaline, the push, the busyness, the little bit of fear of not being ready for lunch service, that little bit of, you know, well going: 'Oh my God, we're open in 15 minutes and the fish hasn't arrived yet', all of those kind of bits – they create an excitement in the day, the stress levels are great if you're a person that thrives off stress levels, if they make you excited, if you like the challenge of it, that's what being a chef is about. It's not just about creating a nice pumpkin pie with your son. That's someone who's a good domestic cook. The difference between that and someone who loves being... the best chefs

aren't always necessarily the best cooks. They're the best people that love that environment. And that's, you know, that will never change because that is the job, you know, we have to be ready for lunch and dinner and you are under pressure – and that is what makes the job exciting. But there has been over the last 20 years a most definitive change from it being aggressive to being adrenalin fuelled – and they're two, they're two slightly different manoeuvres, but it still needs to stay adrenaline fuelled, because otherwise it's not about being a chef and you just become a cook. And, and it can't operate like that anyway and it has to operate under those pressure levels, because that's what restaurants are, you know, when you're doing 180 people on a Saturday night, you can't just, you can't just stroll through that, like there's nothing happening. That's, that's busy. And that's exciting. And that's a buzz and energy, and noise and, you know, another check on and the sound of the machine going on and pans being put on the stove and... or a plate being dropped in the background, all those things, but all those things that create energy and excitement is stuff that's going wrong that you've got to solve there and then – decision making is really sharp and quick. And all of that sort of stuff, is... that's what makes being in the hospitality industry super exciting.

Jimi 33:39

Well, it goes back to what you were first talking about and pubs and that social connection and those unique moments that I feel we're all yearning for and all craving and hoping we'll be back in some form soon. And thank you so much for your time, Tom. And until then, you know, you've kind of serviced people with, you know, recipes and these other businesses and stuff and the things you're doing is really great. And yeah, thank you so much for your time. It's always great to talk to you. And yeah, thank you.

Tom Kerridge 34:08

Thank you very much – cheers Jimi, cheers Alison – lovely to see you.

Jimi 34:23

You've been listening to Life on a Plate with Waitrose. I'm Jimi Famurewa, thank you to my co-host Alison Oakervee, and our guest, Tom Kerridge. To learn more about the series, go to waitrose.com/podcast, and please subscribe wherever you get your podcasts.