

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a chef in a white uniform and hat, working in a kitchen. The chef's hands are visible, holding a metal utensil, possibly a knife or a spoon, and are positioned over a surface that appears to be a stove or a counter. The background is out of focus, showing other kitchen elements and possibly other staff members.

MEET THE Chefs

Whether you're seeing them at the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature, the Taste of Dubai, or eating at their restaurants, we want to know more about these celebrity chefs.

Yi-Hwa Hanna heads beyond the recipes to find out...

Giorgio Locatelli

MEET
GIORGIO at
Taste of Dubai,
or visit his Dubai
restaurant, Ronda
Locatelli

With a string of Michelin-starred restaurants, four TV series and two best-selling cookbooks under his belt, father-of-two Giorgio Locatelli knows food. One of the UK's most well-loved Italian chefs, his London restaurant, Locanda Locatelli, has been awarded a Michelin star eight consecutive years in a row, and his Dubai restaurant, Ronda Locatelli, is one of the city's best.

GH: What was your first-ever dish?

GL: I was born and raised in a restaurant so I've been in a kitchen since I was tiny! But my main job when I was little was to make a big pot of béchamel sauce every day. The restaurant was always preparing food for big events and parties, and lasagne was a staple—so my job was to make the béchamel sauce for the lasagne. Fortunately I don't have to do that anymore, that's somebody else's job now!

GH: What are your top three cities in the world for good dining and cuisine?

GL: I love New York City. It's so vibrant, and there's always something new to try. Paris is another excellent [destination]—my wife and I love to go there via the train from London (where we live), especially

since it's only a couple of hours away. I was also blown away by Istanbul—the quality and freshness, and the excitement and bustle of the wonderful food markets.

GH: When we make pasta sauce, what's better: tinned or fresh tomatoes?

GL: For a home chef, tinned tomatoes can actually be better. When treated in the right way before being packaged, they can be great—especially since fresh tomatoes can change in taste thanks to the acidity levels while they're cooking. Always look for those packaged with ceramic lining on the inside or just sold in ceramic, since this helps you avoid the tinny taste that can come from a can. Choose those made with as few additives as possible—the less ingredients, the better. Though if you're whipping up a quick spaghetti with fresh tomatoes it will always be wonderful...

GH: What about herbs—dried or fresh?

GL: Fresh herbs, always. Dried herbs are popular in America, but I really don't understand why, since when they're dried it can take away so much of the flavour.

GH: Is there one secret ingredient that's vital for an amazing tomato sauce?

GL: It's not really a secret, but sugar is often added to tomato-based pasta sauces

because it helps to balance out the acidity of fresh tomatoes. My secret ingredient is Taggiasca Ligurian black olives. They're slightly bitter, so they naturally balance out the acidity of the tomatoes while adding something special, too. You have to keep the stone in them though.

GH: Let's talk pasta shapes. What types of pasta work best with certain sauces?

GL: With spaghetti, you should always have a velouté sauce. It needs something smooth and silky, and not to be weighed down—in true Italian cuisine, you won't find a spaghetti bolognese. You wouldn't find Italians eating it anyway! Bolognese sauce is better suited to tagliatelle or fettucine; they lend themselves better to a thicker, heavier sauce. Other shapes work better with smaller, clumpier sauces; for instance, shell shapes go with anything but they work especially well with seafood or vegetable based sauces that fill the shell. Otherwise, penne is always a safe bet—it literally goes with everything! Always follow the rule of thumb that the pasta-to-sauce ratio has to make sense. If you've chosen the right shape, you should be able to finish eating the entire dish at the same time, with no sauce left.

Antonio Carluccio

Known to many as the Godfather of Italian gastronomy, Antonio Carluccio—who was born on Italy's Amalfi Coast and began his career at the age of 21—has, to date, written more than 13 much-loved cookbooks sold all over the world, and he has also participated in several TV programmes.

As a young boy, he enjoyed hunting for and collecting wild mushrooms with his father in the Piedmont region of Italy, a hobby that has become his signature. After opening his first restaurant in London in 1998, he was awarded the “knighthood” of gastronomy—the Commendatore OMRI—by the President of Italy for services to Italian gastronomy.

GH: Why did you first decide to become a chef?

AC: I hadn't had my mind set on becoming a cook, it happened more out of passion, curiosity and by accident, and for desiring the food which my mother had cooked.

GH: What are your top 3 cooking tips?

AC: The knives have to be sharp, use the freshest ingredients you can, [and don't forget the] salt in the pasta water!

GH: If you were stuck on a deserted island, what 5 ingredients would you want to take with you?

AC: Flour, olive oil, tomatoes (tinned will do), salt, and a fire source.

GH: And if you were only allowed to take 3 tools, what would you take?

AC: One large pot, one pan for frying, and some utensils.

GH: What's your favourite dish to prepare or eat (if you had to pick just one) and why?

AC: Pasta, butter and cheese—the most simple pasta can be the most satisfying.

GH: Aside from Italian food, what are your other favourite types of cuisine?

AC: Chinese and French.

GH: What are your top 5 cities in the world to visit for good dining and why?

AC: Hong Kong—I love Chinese food and exploring the fantastic street markets where there are so many interesting ingredients, and I also love Melbourne, Rome, Paris, and London.

GH: Why did you decide to open Carluccio's restaurants in Dubai?

I think Dubai is a great place where the touch of normal and genuine Italian food is very much appreciated!

GH: Do you listen to music while you cook, and if so what do you usually like to listen to?

AC: Yes, I often have classical music playing—nothing in particular, but I have just received Andrea Bocelli's *Passione* so I am really enjoying that.

GH: What was your favourite meal to eat when you were a child?

AC: A soup based on vegetables and rice—very basic but it takes me straight back to my childhood.

GH: Do you have a favourite food-related movie?

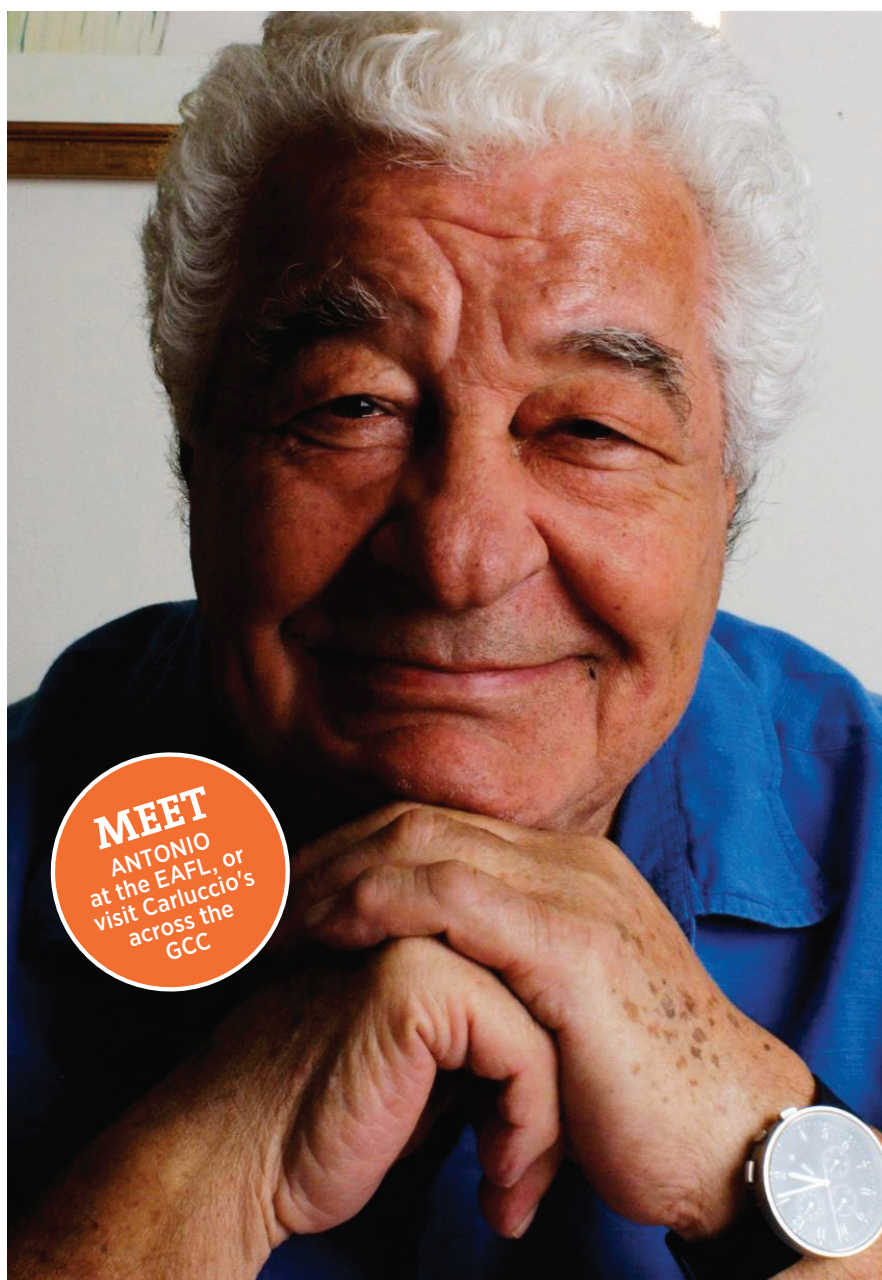
AC: *Babette's Feast* and *La Grande Bouffe*.

GH: How do you like to spend your time when you're not working?

AC: I enjoy painting, whittling sticks and whenever I get the chance (and it's the season), I love to forage for mushrooms. I can be so busy that we have to schedule it in at the beginning of the year—the last two years it just hasn't happened as I've been working on books and filming, but this year I have made sure it will happen. My manager, Anna-Louise, is under strict instructions!

GH: Who cooks most at home?

AC: Me, only me! →



Reza Mahammad

Known as the “Spice Prince of India,” Reza’s various TV series for *The Food Network* (which you can watch exclusively on OSN) see him explore everything from the food and history of Rajasthan to the taste of Indian-inspired food in Africa, and have been a hit all over the world. After taking over his father’s restaurant at the age of 16, the English-born, Indian-raised chef turned it into one of London’s most highly acclaimed Indian restaurants, The Star of India.

GH: Why did you become a chef?

RM: I have always loved to cook and grew up in a family of superb cooks and with my father—a pioneering restaurateur. Being a chef myself happened rather by accident, however, as I had planned to pursue a career in the arts! But when my father died I was just sixteen years old and I was catapulted to the helm of the Star of India restaurant, which had been in our family since the 50s. It was then that I started to hone my craft and made the art of cooking my own.

GH: Can you share some of your best cooking tips with us?

RM: Stay calm, get organised and stay focused! Have all ingredients and essentials to hand, prepped and ready to go into the pan. Organise in advance—particularly with Indian food, it can be nice to prepare and sometimes cook the day before to allow the flavours to intensify, especially with curries. To quote the Girl Guides, “Be Prepared”!

GH: If you were stuck on a desert island with only 5 ingredients to create a meal with, what would you choose and why?

RM: Coconut and avocado (fab foods which also do wonders for the skin), eggs (for binding), flour (a must for bread staple), and fish, fresh from the sea.

GH: And what about tools?

RM: Knives, a meat cleaver, and a pan. These could also double up as useful weapons for self defence on a desert island!

GH: Aside from your own speciality, what are some of your other favourite types of international cuisine to cook or to eat?

RM: I love to play and cook with many cuisines. In my recent book, *Reza’s Indian’s Spice*, I coin the new word “Frindian”, which is a fusion of Indian and French cooking, drawing inspiration from my travels in France and at home in the Charente. I also love Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, Italian, Thai—the list goes on!

GH: You’re coming to Dubai for the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature this month. Are you excited?

RM: Having travelled a lot with *The Food Network* I am very excited to be coming to Dubai. It is a city I’m not familiar with and I love to explore new horizons!

GH: Do you listen to music while you cook, and if so what do you usually like to listen to?

RM: I am a firm believer that music and food are the perfect marriage. My taste in music is so diverse, from classical to jazz, world music and everything in between. At the moment [it’s] Vivaldi and Bach but next week it could be Ella Fitzgerald, Freddie Mercury or Amy Winehouse! Who knows where the mood will take me.

GH: Do you have a favourite food-related movie and if so, what is it?

RM: *Babette’s Feast*—each frame was a feast for the eyes.



A large photograph of Ken Hom, a bald man with a friendly smile, wearing a white t-shirt. He is standing in a kitchen, with a stove and various kitchen items visible in the background. The lighting is bright and natural.

Ken Hom

Internationally-acclaimed chef and restaurateur Ken Hom is a world-renowned authority on oriental cuisine—not only has he published numerous popular cookbooks, he has appeared in and hosted several TV series and documentaries. Ken was awarded a honorary Order of the British Empire for services to the culinary arts in 2009. An avid humanitarian, he has also been an ambassador for international charity Action Against Hunger since 2008.

GH: What are your top 3 cooking tips?

KH: Keep your wok as hot as possible; Always add water or stock or wine instead of more oil or fat; and use a wok or pan cover to concentrate the heat.

GH: If you were stuck on a desert island what 5 ingredients would you bring?

KH: Garlic, what would food taste like without garlic...very bland. Chilli because it can brighten up any dish. Ginger adds spice and goes well with garlic, and Shaoxing rice wine or wine in general adds richness to any dish. Finally, sesame oil, for a final touch to any stir-fried dish.

GH: And what about tools?

KH: Of course, my wok: you can cook anything in it. A cleaver, so necessary for any preparation, and cooking chopsticks, useful for any type of stirring.

GH: What are your top 5 cities in the world to visit for good dining?

KH: Bangkok for fantastic Thai food, the best in the world; Hong Kong, because it has some of the best Chinese food in the world; Paris for its great French brasserie or bistro food; Rio de Janeiro because Claude Troisgros is cooking there, and Taipei for the best dumplings in the world at Din Tai Fung.

GH: Do you listen to music while you cook, and if so what do you listen to?

KH: Always! [I listen to everything] from jazz to Brazilian bossa nova to Cantonese pop music, to Adele, who I love!

GH: What was your favourite meal to eat when you were a child?

KH: Chinese sausage with rice, topped with a fried egg drizzled with oyster sauce.

GH: Do you have a favourite food-related movie?

KH: *Babette's Feast*, because it shows the power of good food and wine and its transforming effect.

GH: How do you like to spend your time when you're not working?

KH: I love reading, especially books on China. I also like to swim. →

SEE

KEN at the
Emirates Airline
Festival of
Literature on
March 8

Daniel Green

As a teenager, Daniel Green struggled with obesity. And by adulthood, he was determined to lose the weight, slim down and get healthy—thus his passion for tasty, healthy food was born. So effective was his healthy diet that he actually became a model, but he eventually gave up modelling to focus on being a chef full-time. His commitment to creating delicious, healthy and low-fat dishes paid off: He has since written several popular healthy cookbooks, and is now a well-loved chef and TV personality. Daniel is the Dusit Healthy Chef Consultant for all Dusit hotels worldwide, and created their “Eat Well, Feel Well” programme.



GH: How can we “prep” our kitchens?

DG: Number one would be to invest in some really good non-stick pans so you don’t have to add much oil to your cooking. You can also have the right kind of oils in your house. Make sure you have olive oil, sesame oil and oils which are low in saturated fats. Get rid of vegetable oils and high fat oils. The other thing that you need is a very well-stocked pantry so that you’ll always have options on how to spice up food whenever you want to cook it.

GH: Please share your top tips with us.

DG: Never add oil to a pan when you are cooking salmon or steak, because you never need it—there are enough fats within that to cook itself without adding extra oil. Never ever use butter, cream or cheese if you want to keep the fat down, and always undercook food (obviously except for poultry). You want to always cook food a little bit lighter and a little bit rarer inside because food continues cooking once it is out of the pan. So if you are cooking salmon, you want to have it a little bit pink on the inside because it will continue cooking once it is out of the pan.

This is the same with vegetables. Run your cooked vegetables under cold water, which locks in the nutrients—it doesn’t make them cold—otherwise as you take your vegetables out, after steaming them, when you leave them in a colander they’ll turn grey and lose all the vitamins.

GH: If you were stuck on a deserted island with only 5 ingredients to create a meal with, what would you choose?

DG: I would certainly have a bottle of olive oil; my non-stick pans so I can cook anything; some miso paste and some sesame oil, and some soya sauce so I can cook any fish or seafood that I find there.

GH: What’s your favourite cuisine?

DG: Japanese. It’s naturally so light and it fills you up with all the protein in the wonderful fish. It’s clean, you feel good after you’ve eaten it and if I could pick one dish to do it would be a tuna tartar.

GH: Can you tell us a few things we can do to make our eating habits healthier?

DG: Take down the fat in your food. So if you can, take your intake to under 20g of saturated fat per day. You will see a huge difference in a weight loss system if you

are eating more than that. The way to do that is to cut out cheese, butter, cream and anything deep fried. The next thing you need to do is to create healthy options when you are eating out. Make sure you do have protein and don’t have lots of carbohydrates when you are in restaurants, and ask for things without the fat or so they aren’t deep fried.

GH: You always say that creating a healthy meal is simpler than it seems.

DG: We’ve forgotten how much easier it is to actually cook. Making a pasta sauce with tomatoes, olive oil, garlic and onions, only takes a few minutes and is [so] quick. It’s the thought of getting all the ingredients out and making it; we feel like it’s a big chore when it isn’t that big of a deal. It doesn’t have to be that hard to cook at home. You just have to make sure you have the ingredients in your house and you can cook things in five or ten minutes. Don’t go and read complicated recipe books from chefs who make them a lot more complicated than they need to be. Grilled, not overcooked food—[it’s] very easy cooking. Go back to basics.

Jenny Morris

The first ever South African chef to host her own series on *The Food Network*, Jenny Morris (affectionately known to her fans as “The Giggling Gourmet”) has been running her own catering and recreational cooking school in Cape Town for 14 years. She has written for numerous magazines, penned a few best-selling cookbooks, and enjoyed success on the radio—over the past nine years, she has broadcast more than 900 radio shows. Jenny—who has cooked for royals and celebrities—also has her own range of products and utensils.

Jenny is also an examiner for The Culinary Academy, a judging board for various food competitions, and is often the first choice for product launches, demonstrations and other food-related exhibitions in South Africa. Her recent series, *Jenny Morris Cooks Morocco*, sees her heading to Marrakech and beyond to explore the colours and flavours of Moroccan cuisine.

GH: Why did you become a chef?

LM: I knew from a young age that I wanted to cook for people. I was lucky to have parents who encourage me to cook with them.

GH: If you were stuck on a deserted island with only 5 ingredients and 3 tools, what would you choose to take along with you?

LM: Salt, Parmesan cheese, garlic, olive oil and chillies—you can flavour a lot of dishes with these. For tools: My cleaver, my wok and my pestle and mortar.

GH: What's your favourite dish to cook or prepare?

LM: Crispy Roasted Belly Pork with a Honey Chilli Sesame Soy Sauce. I love the rich succulence of belly pork when it has been slow roasted, and nothing beats bubbly, crisp and salty crackling!

GH: Aside from your own specialties, what are your other favourite types of international cuisine (to cook or eat)?

LM: I like fragrant food, so I enjoy Thai, Indian and Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese...oh, I just love all cuisines.

GH: Do you listen to music while you cook, and if so what do you usually like to listen to?

LH: I love listening to first and second generation jazz and blues, but I have a very versatile taste in music, from rock to the classics. I adore Madeleine Peyroux.

GH: What was your favourite childhood meal?

LM: My mother used to make the most unbelievably delicious stews, I can still taste them in my mind!

GH: Do you have a favourite food-related movie?

LM: *Chocolat* and *Babette's Feast*.

GH: How do you like to spend your time when you're not working—any favourite hobbies or pastimes?

LM: I love to garden and I grow a lot of what we eat. I also love crocheting blankets and reading.

GH: Who cooks more at home—you or your other half?

LM: Haaaaa, me, of course! →



Bobby Chinn

Half-Chinese, half-Egyptian and New Zealand-born, Bobby Chinn's life has been as varied as his background. He's done everything from working the New York Stock Exchange to stand-up comedy in Los Angeles, but it's in food that he found his true calling: Bobby has run several renowned and award-winning restaurants in Vietnam, and is the TV host of *World Café: Asia*.

GH: What are your kitchen-prep rules?

BC: 1.) A clean kitchen is a happy one—it shows respect for the work place. 2.) An organised kitchen is a quick kitchen—you spend less time looking for things, and more time on preparation and cooking.

3.) A good kitchen has no waste—save the stems of herbs for stock, the off-cuts of onions, cucumbers and tomatoes for gazpacho, or convert food that would otherwise go bad into a different dish. [And] the chef is always right.

GH: You're stuck on a deserted island.

What five ingredients would you want?

BC: When someone tells me I am "stuck" on a deserted island it really does not sound all that pleasant, especially if I am not a huge fan of sand and beaches. So let

me try to make it worthwhile. Got to have eggs, flour, butter, sugar and water. This will at least allow me to make desserts, pasta, cookies, and a lot of energy!

GH: And what about tools?

BC: Would there be electricity? My favorite tools use electricity so I will just assume that I am not on a desert island and at a Four Seasons. I would have a chef's knife. They are priceless and until they come out with a laser cutter I do not know of many substitutes to do the job, with the exception of a cleaver. I could also bring along a mandolin, they are very useful for paper thin cuts, matchstick cuts on some fruits and vegetables that also allow for uniform cuts. I love a pair of heavy duty tongs as they are the perfect companion when dealing with a mud crab untied and on the loose, as well as hot lids, or turning over items that are browning.

GH: What are your top 5 cities in the world to visit for good dining and why?

BC: Not in any particular order: Lima, Peru; it has phenomenal Japanese food, but also the Japanese Peruvian made famous by Nobu and Toshiro Konishi. Damascus, Syria, simply the best Middle Eastern food I have ever eaten anywhere. San Francisco for some of the best authentic global selection out there. And London, shockingly enough—the Brits were once notorious for how bad their food was 20 years ago, but today its one of the hottest destinations on the culinary map! It's hard not to include Paris, Tokyo, or any of the Italian cities, but it also would be unfair not to include at least one city from the East, such as Singapore.

GH: What was your fave meal as a kid?

BC: It would be a toss-up between my two grandmothers' cooking. My Chinese grandmother was making light, clean Chinese food with flavours and execution I had never experienced ever again. My Egyptian grandmother made hearty food. When you get older and as they stopped cooking, you really start to appreciate grandmothers even more—it's actually hard to pinpoint a particular dish because it was like a buffet in both places.

GH: And your favourite foodie movie?

BC: *Eat Drink Man Woman*. I loved it.

GH: Who cooks more at home?

BC: My other half. She has her own "system." I prep, we eat together, then I continue to eat all leftovers, ever, then we clear the table together, leaving me with the washing up. That's how it usually works. It keeps me humble, loving and her perfect man!



SEE
BOBBY at the
Emirates Airline
Festival of
Literature on
March 8 & 9



SEE
SUZANNE at
the Emirates
Airline Festival of
Literature on
March 8

Suzanne Husseini

Having lived in Dubai for 14 years, chef Suzanne Husseini considers the UAE to be her other home. She has performed live cooking demos in Paris, Frankfurt, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and has been featured on several local TV shows, and her books are among the most well-loved showcases of Arabic cuisine.

GH: Why did you become a chef?

SH: Actually, my first passion was teaching as I always felt that was my calling. I knew at age seven that I would be a teacher some day. I was always fascinated with the art of cooking and naturally enjoyed food just as much. It was my delicious destiny.

GH: What are your top 3 cooking tips?

SH: Peel garlic ahead of time and keep it in a jar in the fridge to save time. Squeeze lemon juice and do the same so you're always prepared. Invest in a few good sharp knives, the best tools in a kitchen.

GH: If you were stuck on a deserted island with only 5 ingredients and 3 tools, what would you take with you?

Yoghurt, cucumbers, lemons, tomatoes, olive oil and [my other half] will bring the bread and salt. I like simple food and the options and combinations with these five ingredients can be endless. They are cooling and provide complete nourishment. For tools: A knife, cutting board and my large pestle and mortar as that can double as my serving bowl.

GH: What's your fave dish to make?

SH: I love to make braised lamb shanks with aromatic vegetables, tomato sauce and pomegranate. I enjoy the steps to prep the dish before placing it in the oven to cook for four hours, until the meat is succulent and falls off the bone. The anticipation is as good as the result.

GH: What are your top 5 cities in the world to visit for good dining?

I think food is amazing when it is from areas where different cultures have exchanged ingredients and flavours, like India, Brazil, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and China.

GH: Do you like to listen to music when you're cooking?

SH: Indeed, I can't cook without hearing the enchanting voice of Fairouz.

GH: What was your favourite meal to eat as a child?

My mother used to make home-made Arabic bread. I would watch with delight as it baked into a big puffball in the oven. I would pierce it to let the steam out and slip in my waiting piece of cheddar cheese. Warm, melting cheese encased in hot fresh bread. That was LOVE.

GH: Do you have a fave foodie movie?

SH: I recently watched *Woman On Top* starring Penelope Cruz. It was fun and the message was clear: Where there is food there is love. ■