

INTERVIEW

The Michelin-starred chef tells **Laura French** what it takes to run cooking masterclasses with P&O Cruises

Q. What does your work with P&O Cruises involve?

A. I'm the patron of The Cookery Club, a wonderful space on *Britannia* – no other cookery school in the world has had as many famous, talented and Michelin-starred chefs taking masterclasses as this one. My classes are very hands-on. I offer one-on-one guidance and answer questions – the key is to break it down step by step. I also host dinner parties. Everyone gathers around the stove with a glass of fizz while I make the starter, then we all sit down at the chef's table for delicious food and matching wines. It's a very special evening.

Q. What dishes can guests learn to make?

A. The beauty of cooking is it can appeal to everyone, however skilled. Enthusiasm is key. I have created masterclasses all guests can enjoy. They include classic fish pie, chicken pie with pastry and Italian seafood dishes, which are simple but full of flavour. When they travel to the Caribbean, guests can look forward to learning how to prepare jerk chicken and caramelised rum-and-coconut bananas, as well as Mexican and Brazilian street food. There is even a family class where young budding chefs can come to learn tricks of the trade.

Q. Where have you travelled with P&O and what do you enjoy most?

A. I have been working with P&O Cruises for many years so there aren't many of their itineraries I haven't travelled on! I always enjoy seeing the beautiful Norwegian fjords and I can't wait to sail on *Iona* to this region. The thing that impresses me most is that nothing is too much trouble for the crew, they all have a great attitude.

Q. What inspired you to become a chef?

A. The greatest culinary influence was my beautiful Italian mother; a natural-born cook. My earliest memories are of my mother taking me to her family, just outside Genoa, where we would sit and eat steaming bowls of risotto, pasta and thick, hearty soups made with root vegetables, pulses and a little rice and Parmesan. Her philosophy was buy the best quality you can afford and let the flavours speak for themselves. I decided to train as a chef after I left school. Arriving in London as a 16-year-old with £7.36 to my name, my first job was under Albert Roux and Michel Roux at Le Gavroche. At 24, I became the head chef and joint owner of Harvey's, which led to me becoming the youngest chef to be awarded three Michelin stars by the age of 33.

Q. What's your favourite dish?

A. A steaming bowl of risotto is an ideal dish and one to which you can add an infinite number of flavours. Heaven in a bowl.

Find out more at pocruises.com/themed-cruises/food-heroes



Marco Pierre White

P&O Cruises