

THE THINGS THAT MADE ME

# TOM KERRIDGE

Chef restaurateur **Tom Kerridge**, 49, is a familiar face on TV and has ten books and eight restaurants to his name – including the only pub in England to boast two Michelin stars. Tom is married to sculptor Beth Cullen, and they have a seven-year-old son, Acey



**TALENT:** HOSPITALITY

Growing up, we didn't have a lot of money. After my parents separated, when I was 11 and my brother, Sam, was eight, my mum worked extremely hard – often doing two jobs to make ends meet. But she was unfailingly hospitable, always welcoming our friends with warmth and kindness. They could turn up really late at night and she'd still offer them a cup of tea and something to eat. Mum's natural hospitableness has hugely influenced who I am and how I run my businesses. Making people feel welcome and at ease is as important as offering good food when you're running a restaurant.



**BOOK:** *WHITE HEAT*

The chef Marco Pierre White transformed the image of British cooking, and his book *White Heat* had a massive influence on me as a young chef in my first job as a commis chef at Calcot Manor in Tetbury. Marco was the first of a new breed of groundbreaking British chefs, including my hero, the late Gary Rhodes, who I worked under at Rhodes in the Square. Fifteen years after working for Gary, I was honoured to be asked to contribute to Marco's 25th anniversary edition of *White Heat*, which was published in 2015.



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**SONG:** *HERE COMES THE SUN*

Even before my parents separated, my father wasn't around much, so happy memories of times with him are few and far between. But he was a great fan of The Beatles, and I do remember us sitting together on the sofa, listening to *Here Comes the Sun* through giant headphones. I would

have been about seven years old, the age my son is now. Having experienced a mostly fatherless childhood myself, I try to be around for Acey. It's been interesting to see how similar in character we both are – and to discover that, as a parent, you learn new things about yourself through your child!





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**SPORT: RUGBY**

As a teenager I played rugby and was lucky to be part of a brilliant team, some of whom went on to become professional. Rugby taught me about the importance of working together as a team. It’s a game that connects players of all shapes,

sizes and abilities. Everyone has their own important role to play, but they need to be able to come together to achieve success. It’s a great analogy for life in a kitchen, and life itself in fact. We all need to be able to respect and get on with people of all types.

**NUMBER: SEVEN**

Although rugby was the sport I played as a child, it’s no secret that I’m also a great fan of football. You don’t have to pick one over the other! I’m a Manchester United season ticket holder, and the number seven tattoo on my leg is a homage to Bryan Robson – someone who drove his team on and showed the kind of mental strength that I so admire in a leader.



**FURNITURE:**

**INFLATABLE ARMCHAIR**

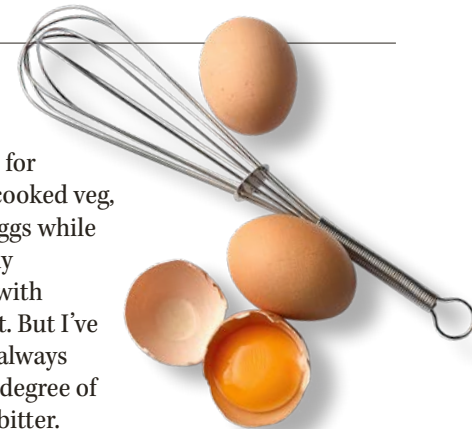
I was 23 when I met my wife, Beth. Three years later, we scraped money together to buy our first home – a studio flat in Crouch End, in north London. We had no money for furniture and lived with just two clear inflatable armchairs for our first six months there. We were both working very hard and trusted that in time everything would get better, and of course, it did. In 2005, we took on the lease for The Hand & Flowers in Marlow.

We gained our first Michelin star there a year later.



**GO TO FOOD: EGGS**

At home, I like to whip up speedy dishes, and omelettes are quick to make and the ideal vehicle for leftovers in the fridge. A vegetable tortilla, using cooked veg, is something Acey can help with. He whisks the eggs while I chop the veg. Eggs are also a key ingredient in my favourite restaurant pud, crème brûlée. I started with Elizabeth David’s classic recipe, which is excellent. But I’ve tweaked it over the years, to ensure the vanilla is always perfectly distributed, and the sugar just the right degree of burnt. It has to be crisp and crunchy, but not too bitter.



**HAPPY PLACE: SWIMMING POOL**

I discovered swimming when I was trying to lose weight after my 40th birthday. I realised I wouldn’t have much time ahead of me if I didn’t make some big changes to my life. I drank far too much (I’ve now given up) and that had caused the weight to pile on. As well as helping me to get in shape – over three years I lost 11 stone, the equivalent of 70 bags of sugar! – swimming was amazing. You’re completely alone, in your own headspace, and that is a very creative place to be. Ploughing up and down a pool, I found I could solve problems and come up with ideas – without trying.

**FOOTWEAR: TRAINERS**

I’m known for my love of white trainers, and for my 40th birthday, Beth snuck a pair out of my wardrobe and had them ‘bronzed’ so they now hang as an artwork in The Hand & Flowers. They’re a bit of fun – and symbolic of who we both are: practical me, and artistic, slightly mischievous Beth!



**EPIPHANY: KNIVES**

I wasn't academic and left school with only four GCSEs, and not much idea about what to do next. In my heart I felt that something would come along, and – after a couple of years of drifting and doing the odd bit of acting (I played a thug in TV shows *London's Burning* and *Miss Marple*) – I got a job as a washer-upper in a restaurant, never expecting that this was where I'd have my lightbulb moment. But I loved



everything about the high-energy atmosphere of the busy, buzzy kitchen, and had soon bought my first set of Sabatier knives and signed on to a life-changing catering course at my local college. I've been through many knives of all descriptions since then – but I still have one of those magical first Sabatiers in my toolkit.



**SUPERPOWER: STAMINA**

My ability to thrive on very little sleep is a great help in my line of work. Chefs tend to work hard and long. We take things to extremes and we're sustained by stamina. From my first job, aged 18, I was often working 15 hours a day. We do it because we love it. And we've got to love it to do it!

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The Hand & Flowers is currently offering a Monday-night package costing £575 for two people, including a one-night stay, a three-course à la carte dinner (excluding drinks), and breakfast the following morning. Available Mondays only, through to the end of 2023, subject to availability. Find out more at [thehandandflowers.co.uk](http://thehandandflowers.co.uk) or call 01628 482277.



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