



MasterChef's Chris Badenoch

- bound for the bush

by senior correspondent Jennifer Martens

Peer pressure isn't always bad. Sometimes, your friends know what is good for you before you do. Just ask Victorian Chris Badenoch, who said he would *never* appear on a reality television show. However, the self-proclaimed "overenthusiastic home cook" had to eat his words after he reluctantly accepted his friends' advice and applied to be a contestant on the first season of *MasterChef Australia*.

If his mates hadn't been so relentless in their efforts to sway Chris, his dream of writing a cookbook would still be just that - a dream. Now, more than a year after the show, his cookbook is due to be released in October and he is looking for a place to establish his beer-inspired restaurant. Chris knows he is very fortunate. More than 7000 people applied for the first season of the show and the majority of those people are still trying to find *their* big break.

"The experience on *MasterChef* has allowed me to pursue my love of food and

beer with much more ease," said Chris. "I've been introduced to so many interesting people and the show has opened many doors that would have otherwise been shut tight."

His interest in cooking is something that began innocently enough by reading books about food and experimenting in the kitchen. However, in the past decade, that interest became so intense that he eventually gave up his career as a graphic designer to pursue his love of food and cooking. Stepping into his home reveals his passion: he has more than 900 cookbooks and a commercial-grade kitchen that he installed 10 years ago.

"I get a massive kick out of food and everything associated with it," says the 42-year-old, whose attitude on cooking revolves around respect - respect for the animals consumed and the ingredients available. He does not approve of waste, especially when it comes to game. "If an animal dies for our consumption, we should eat all of it," says Chris. He is also passionate about using local and seasonal produce whenever possible.

His philosophy, which marries well with the ethos of the majority of hunters, has led him to pursue an interest in hunting. As buying an entire carcass of certain game can be quite difficult, Chris is excited about the prospect of stalking his own game and having the option of using every part of

it, which is something not many cooks do these days. He shares his beliefs and a number of mouthwatering recipes such as Korean beer snack and Beer-braised beef sandwich via his website 'Chris Badenoch: cooking eating and drinking it all'.

Despite his limited experience in the field, Chris firmly believes that hunting for the table is something all meat eaters should experience at some point in their lives. He says if people are not prepared to kill an animal they plan to eat, then they have no right to eat meat on a regular basis. "To me, it's all about respect and understanding that an animal has to be killed for our consumption." He also believes that hunting wild animals is a healthier and tastier option to factory-farmed, unhappy beasts raised on processed feed.

Behind the scenes of *MasterChef*

If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. It's an adage the creators of *MasterChef* must thrive on, as they turn up the heat on their contestants each week. And those who can't handle it don't make it very far. Chris was seen sweating on a number of occasions, but he never crumbled. He cooked with confidence and determination and with a goal to be dubbed Australia's first *MasterChef*.

While Chris didn't win, he was a standout from the first episode to the very last. Not only did he move around the kitchen like it was an extension of his body, but he was always true to his beliefs and style of cooking, never afraid to think outside of the



This image sums up Chris's cooking philosophy well.

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box. However, every story needs a villain, and Chris's confidence and laidback attitude were often mistaken for arrogance, making him the program's perfect 'bad boy'.

Fans of the show would remember the episode in which Chris served up an entire pig's head. The challenge was for the contestants to create their ultimate three-course meal. In addition to the roasted pig's head, Chris produced a stuffed duck-neck sausage and 'beeramisu'. This challenge served as Chris's favourite moment and recipe of the show - and one that really set him apart from the others. "Not only did I convincingly win the challenge, but I also got to introduce people to my style of cooking."

This is exactly what he plans to do in his new restaurant. The pairing of beer and food, particularly meat, comes naturally to Chris and the options this creates bring him much excitement. He hopes to use every

game animal he can get hold of - whatever is in season and available to him will be on the menu. "I do not discriminate when it comes to consuming animals; I love them all," he said. "And I am of the opinion that we should eat a more diverse range of meat, rather than large-scale farming a small number of breeds."

"*MasterChef* was a real roller-coaster of an experience," says Chris. "I endured more than four months of filming. It was tiring, emotionally draining and frustrating, as well as exhilarating and loads of fun all at the same time. There are many other factors to take into consideration above and beyond the quality of cooking and I think that was the single hardest issue to deal with."

But looking back, Chris wouldn't change a thing. He is extremely grateful for the "incredible, once-in-a-lifetime experiences", particularly the amazing chefs

he was introduced to, the travel and the intimate lessons in cooking, all of which he says he could not have done on his own.

When you open certain 'doors', your life can change dramatically. Answering the door to *MasterChef* has meant a whole new world for Chris. Not only has it allowed him to pursue his food dreams and find love with fellow contestant Julia Jenkins, it has turned him into a bit of a celebrity, particularly with Australians who enjoy meat and beer. The show was watched by an average of 3.7 million people each week, a handful of whom frequently approach him on the street to ask about the show and his style of cooking, which is something he loves to talk about. As a result of his success, his calendar is booked solid with beer and food demos across the country.

Another unexpected bonus of his experience on *MasterChef* is his new-found interest in hunting for the table. Chris has already applied for a firearms licence and has a few hunting trips 'brewing'. If they prove to be successful, Chris says he will happily share a few beer-inspired recipes with fellow game enthusiasts. Good luck, Chris. Wild game lovers everywhere are drooling in anticipation.

To read more of Chris Badenoch's recipes, check out <http://chrisbadenoch.com>

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Beer-braised bunny sausage rolls

This recipe makes 20 sausage rolls and is well accompanied with Bière de Garde, a dark Belgian Trappist ale, a Belgian blonde or English ale.

Ingredients

- olive oil - for cooking
- 1 rabbit, about 1.2kg - segmented
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 leeks, white part only - thinly sliced
- 3 cloves garlic - sliced
- 1 fresh bay leaf
- 4 sprigs thyme
- a 330ml bottle Belgian blonde beer
- handful chopped flat-leaf parsley
- puff pastry
- 1 free-range egg yolk - beaten

Method

Preheat the oven to 180C.

Heat a flameproof heavy-based casserole dish over medium heat and pour in a good amount of olive oil.

Season the rabbit pieces with salt and pepper, then add them to the pan and cook for 5 minutes until browned all over, working in batches if necessary. Remove these from the pan and set aside.



Chris' beer-braised bunny sausage rolls.

Sauté the leek and garlic for 5 minutes or until softened and slightly browned, then add the herbs and return the rabbit to the pan. Deglaze the pan with beer then bring to the boil.

Add the beer, cover and cook in the oven for 3 hours or until the rabbit is very tender and falling off the bone. Remove from the oven and leave to cool in the liquid.

Remove the rabbit pieces from the braising liquid and discard the herbs. Return the pan to the stove and simmer over a medium heat for 20 minutes or until the mixture is reduced by two-thirds and appears oily.

Strip all of the meat from the bones, being very careful to remove all bones (rabbit bones are very delicate and can break easily). Return the meat to the braising liquid and leave to cool. Stir through the chopped parsley.

Roll out the pastry to an oblong 30x40cm. Cut in half lengthways.

Take half of the filling and, using floured hands, roll it into a long sausage shape and place along the long edge of one piece of pastry. Brush the edges with a little water and fold over, pressing down to seal. Place the sealed edge underneath. Repeat with the remaining pastry and filling.

Using a sharp knife, cut the sausage rolls into 3cm lengths, discarding the end pieces. Brush these with egg yolk and using scissors, snip little 'V's in the top of the sausage roll.

Bake for 15 minutes or until golden.

Serve with pea purée, fried leek and grilled rabbit kidneys. ●



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