

# Cooking herself Thin?

**Gizzi Erskine**, glamorous chef and star of C4's *Cook Yourself Thin*, has helped us fall in love again with good food and home cooking. So how does she rate her own health and eating habits?

**Q How healthy are you on a scale of 1 to 10?**

Oh, like every woman I go through phases. At the moment I'm being really good so I wouldn't quite give me a 10, I'd give me an 8.5. I go through six-month phases, where for half the year I'm really looking after myself and keeping fit then at other times I'm just like 'oh, sod it'.

**Q Do you allow yourself indulgences?**

I do absolutely! To be honest my all-round theory is, and I guess this is nine times out of ten how I deal with my life, I do try to cook really healthily and I'm one of those people who because I'm a cook and I'm a chef, I really value ingredients. I don't really like to put rubbish things into my body so I don't really eat processed foods at all.

Years ago when I first got into food, I struggled with my weight because I liked food so much, so I had to learn how to cook savvier. That is an ethos that I take on now on a day-to-day basis. I do allow myself to have puddings, but nine times out of ten I am really good with the food I eat. If it's indulgent I won't eat too much of it as I think I just naturally prefer good food – it just makes me feel better.

**Q How do you stay healthy?**

I would generally say it is just through cooking savvier and eating a ton of vegetables. I love eating seasonally so I'll eat whatever veggies are in season and tons of them, so at the moment as

we're getting into winter, I'm going to be gorging on greens because they are my favourite thing in the world and beetroots as well. I get quite excited about what comes in seasonally as each one brings loads of new yummy things so that's probably my main way of keeping healthy. I've got to start exercising again. This is what I mean by having six months on and six months off. I'll be really good for six months with exercise then I'll be really rubbish. Currently, I'm being really rubbish. When I do exercise I like to run, do pilates and power plate.

**Q What are your favourite foods?**

Oh, you see that's another thing about being a girl, you change your mind all the time! At the moment, I really love an heirloom tomato salad with really creamy mozzarella cheese. I also love slow-roasted shoulder of lamb and Asian food, but raw vegetables are probably my most favourite thing in the universe.

**Q Which ingredients do you most love to add to your food?**

Garlic. I love it, just can't live without the stuff. I use it in all sorts of ways though I'm not a fan of it raw. I love all Asian flavours such as chilli, lime leaves, lemongrass, coriander, ginger and galangal – those are the sort of things I always have in my cupboard.

**Q You've been involved in Innocent's 5-for-5 pop-up cafés around London. How did that happen?**

I got approached directly by Innocent and I think because they wanted a young take on food. As you know as a brand it's really young and funky – they wanted to find a chef that would encapsulate that and it was really kind that they thought I was befitting for that. We had several meetings where we discussed food and my perceptions towards getting your five-a-day and also vegetarian food. It's exciting to really embrace the vegetables – I think we as a nation tend to see the vegetable as a side dish, the classic idea of meat and two veg, yet vegetables can be turned into the most phenomenal things.

**Q A little birdie tells us that exciting TV and book plans are in the pipeline. Can you tell us more?**

It's a big Channel 4 show. It's going to be one of the biggest shows that the channel has done to date so it's really, really exciting. I think that's as much as I can say at the moment. We're also hoping to do a celebrity version of *Cook Yourself Thin*, which will go out around New Year time.

We're also negotiating a book at the moment and it's something I believe that every woman in every part of the world, in fact anyone who is health conscious, weight conscious, or who is a massive foodie will completely love.



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**Q Do you have a few tips for eating yourself thin?**

You've got to look at yourself and be totally honest about what your problem is. Unfortunately it is scientific – it's the calories and what goes in and what goes out. It's important to be savvy about what you put into your body. I remember cooking and thinking certain things would be quite low fat – and, yes, that may be, but they had millions of calories. Just be more aware of what calories foods contain and you will also be really surprised with what you can eat rather than what you cannot.

Also, halve or quarter your portions and measure your carbohydrate portion – I think the British feel like they have to fill their plate and that's fine but you've got to remember that carbohydrates add over half the calories we consume each day so if you halved that, you would save yourself around 500 calories each day.

**Q What do you love most about your work?**

The fact that every day is just so different and bananas! The best thing for me is I'm absolutely besotted with food and I'm allowed to be creative doing something I truly love.

Look out for Gizzi's blogs and new recipe posts on [www.gizzierskine.com](http://www.gizzierskine.com)



Gizzi Erskine is the star presenter of Channel 4's hit series 'Cook Yourself Thin'. Her book 'Gizzi's Kitchen Magic' is available in book stores nationwide and you can see her on ITV's *This Morning* and Channel 4's *Iron Chef*.

Interview by Julie Penfold