



IN CONVERSATION WITH Teresa Cutter

Get to know Teresa Cutter, a well-known Australian chef and pioneer in the field of wellness and healthy cooking.



Tell us about your journey into the food world. Where did it begin and how?

I was inspired to cook by my Polish great-aunt, Ciocia. She practically raised me and my sister, Carol, for the first 10 years of our lives, as Mum and Dad were always working crazy long hours to support our family.

Ciocia had her own vegetable garden and chickens in the backyard for fresh eggs and nourishing soups. She would cook every day from scratch and encouraged me to help her in the kitchen when she prepared the meals. One of my fondest memories was helping Ciocia make a glorious semolina porridge on a cold winter's morning. It wasn't like your typical sweet porridge, but a hearty savoury version made simply from water, semolina and a pinch of salt. Ciocia would serve it to me topped simply with a generous knob of butter or with a soft coddled egg that you would lightly mix into your semolina before devouring. I still eat her porridge and remember the simplicity of her cooking that nourished our bodies and made us feel good.

Later on, after finishing Year 12 high school, it was an easy transition into hospitality, first as a sommelier and beverage attendant for a local hotel, then starting my chef's apprenticeship under the guidance of renowned chef Neil Jackson in Western Australia. I had the opportunity to work in a small five-star hotel and I had some wonderful mentors and teachers who guided my enthusiasm and rewarded my hard work ethic and talent.

It was the start of the "Nouvelle Cuisine" movement in France, defined by the use of high-quality, fresh ingredients, lighter meals, and a simple and clean approach to cooking, which inspired my mantra of "Keep it simple, make it yourself, and know what's in the food you eat". Seasonal, simple and affordable to make without having to use a tonne of ingredients.

What has been your most memorable moment throughout your journey with food?

There have been so many memorable moments in my food journey: Starting my own catering company for film and TV production companies. Recipe development and food styling for iconic brands such as Kellogg's, Campbells, Aldi, Vitamix and IHG Hotels Group. Getting a triple cookbook deal when I first moved to Sydney more than 20 years ago. After that I opened my own company called The Healthy Chef and launched the iconic Healthy Chef Café in Avalon Beach, Sydney, then started my own supplement brand focusing on quality and wellness for women.

What are you currently enjoying eating, cooking and experimenting with?

I am loving roasted vegetables such as carrot and capsicum that I pile over a bed of whipped cannellini beans and spoon over a fresh parsley and lemon salsa verde. I'm really enjoying seasonal stone fruits, juicy wedges of rockmelon and crisp baby gem lettuce that form part of a grazing platter with homemade labneh, figs and toasted walnuts. I'm experimenting with my focaccia toppings from my new book, *Simple Healthy Recipes*, to serve up for friends and family. I use a high-hydration method when making my focaccia, which allows for a wonderfully soft and tender crumb that's purely delicious. You can top it simply with oregano, smashed olives and olive oil or embellish the top with roasted tomato, torn basil, olive oil and a splash of aged balsamic before serving.

What are your four top tips for cooking simple, healthy recipes?

- 1) Don't overcomplicate the recipe with too many ingredients.
- 2) Choose seasonal and local.
- 3) Use quality extra-virgin olive oil when cooking your food in preference to other fats.
- 4) Food is life – focus on cooking food at home, utilising more fresh fruits and vegetables and preparing it with love.

What's next for you?

I'm working on my new cookbook and love creating new recipes and seeing the book come to life with our amazing team who put it all together. My husband, Paul, CEO of The Healthy Chef brand, is an amazing photographer who takes all the images for the recipes I create. We make a good team and work synergistically together.

I'm also working on a few new women's products to support menopause and metabolic health. It's a first of its kind and based around supporting total women's wellness.

For more, visit thehealthychef.com



Photography Paul Cutter and Licht Pan