

DARREN SIMPSON: THE CHEF

Darren studied and began his career in Northern Ireland where he was born. Within two years of landing his first job, Darren was named UK's Young Chef of the Year. At 21, he was and still is, the youngest ever winner of this prestigious annual award open to all UK chefs under the age of 25.

From 1992 to 1999, Darren has trained and worked with some of the greatest, including Paul Rankin's Michelin-star Roscoff (Ireland), Albert Roux's Le Gavroche (London), Sally Clarke's (London), Bibendum (London), as joint Head Chef of the acclaimed River Café (London), and Head Chef at Sir Terence Conran's Sartoria in Saville Row (London).

In 1999, Darren was head-hunted to become the Head Chef of Aqua Luna Bar and Restaurant at Sydney's East Circular Quay. Having received several great reviews in its first 8 weeks, acclaiming Darren's food as "dynamic" and "big-flavoured", together with its prime location on Circular Quay, Aqua Luna was the optimum spot for Darren to showcase his knowledge of fine Italianate cuisine.

From 2005 – 2007 Darren was Executive Chef and Co-Proprietor of dining hotspot La Sala in Sydney's fashionable Surry Hills. Simpson moved to Sydney's Northern Beaches in 2008 where he took a 12 month post at Palm Beach institution Barrenjoey House. In early 2010, Darren Simpson and Dean Haritos opened La Scala on Jersey, a sexy, vibrant Italian Restaurant in Woollahra.

Simpson dares to 'keep it simple'. His culinary principle revolves around the unyielding belief and respect of delivering an experience to his customers. His dishes are personally designed to reflect the freshest variety of Australian seasonal produce. The irony of an Irish born lad that creates Italian inspired pieces is simply inspiring to see and most importantly, taste.

Darren Simpson: The Personality

Darren is resident chef of Australia's highest rating morning current affairs program, 'Sunrise' (Channel 7). His other TV appearances include presiding as Judge on hit reality show, 'My Restaurant Rules' (Channel 7) and Presenter of lifestyle program 'Live This' (Channel 10). Off the screen, Darren has attended invitations as MC and/or speaker of key food and wine events across Australia.

Simpson has penned words for various national and overseas publications: Food Feature writer, 'Esquire Magazine' (UK); Food Editor, 'Live This Magazine' (Australia); and Contributor, Sydney Morning Herald's 'Good Living' (Australia).

In his 'spare' moments, Darren has volunteered his time at Canteen Camp where he taught over 50 young cancer teens to cook the perfect risotto; is an ambassador for The Childrens Food Education Foundation; has campaigned for non GM (genetically modified) foods with Greenpeace; and cooked up a storm with fellow Master Chefs for Oxfam Community Aid Abroad four years in a row.

Darren Simpson clearly knows how to cook courses of fine Italian dishes; all of such is garnished with his cheekily infectious Irish charm. Not the celebrity chef, Simpson is the chef for the people. As he said, it's all about "keeping it simple."

Darren Simpson: Achievements

Acorn Awards (1999 London U.K)

One of thirty National winners of the Caterer & Hotelkeeper Acorn Award Awarded to people under the age of 30 in the catering industry dubbed 'stars of the future'

Association of pastry chefs of Great Britain (1994 London, UK)

One of eight National Finalists in 'The Dessert of the Year Competition'

Academie Culinaire de France (1994 London U.K.)

British National Finalist for 'Annual Awards of Excellence'

German wine Academy

Diploma and Distinction (1993 Rhine, Germany)

Winner of United Kingdom Young Chef Of The Year (1992 London, UK)

Also Regional Finalist in 1991 - this prestigious competition is for all chefs under 25 in the UK.

British wine and spirit education trust
Diploma and Distinction (1991 Belfast N Ireland)

Further Credits and Career Highlights:

Nov 05 - Aug 07 LA SALA

Executive Chef and Co-Proprietor for this purpose built and designed 120 seat restaurant and fifty seat bar in Sydney's fashionable Surry Hills. La Sala has set new standards for Italian influenced cuisine and immediately was awarded a Chef's hat in the authoritative Good Food Guide published by the city's leading newspaper the Sydney Morning Herald.

Nov 99 – Nov 04 AQUA LUNA BAR & RESTAURANT

Head Chef for this 150 seat restaurant & 200 seat bar Circular Quay, Sydney Harbour, Since its opening Aqua Luna has received rave reviews & also gained a chef's Hat in the Good Food Guide

Sept 97 – Sept 99 SARTORIA RESTAURANT

Head Chef for Sir Terence Conran within this 120 seat Italian influenced restaurant in Savile Row. Joined pre opening and completed full pre-opening schedule.

June 95-Sept 97 RIVER CAFÉ

Head Chef for Rose Gray and Ruthie Rodgers at this prestigious riverside restaurant (London UK)

Feb 95-June 95 FULHAM ROAD

Sous chef for Richard Corrigan in this one star Michelin restaurant. (London U.K.)

Feb 94-Feb 95 BIBENDUM RESTAURANT

Chef tournant for the acclaimed Chef, Simon Hopkinson. (London U.K.)

June 93-Dec93 ROSCOFF RESTAURANT

Sous Chef for Paul Rankin, Chef patron of this one star Michelin Restaurant. (Belfast U.K.)

June 92-June93 LE GAVROCHE RESTAURANT

Responsible for the pastry department of this three star Michelin restaurant under Chef patron, Albert Roux, and Chef de Cuisine, Michel Roux Jr. (London U.K.)

June 90-June 92 ROSCOFF RESTAURANT

Chef de Partie of this one star Michelin Restaurant under Chef Patron Paul Rankin, working all sections and taking responsibility for the pastry department (Belfast U.K.)

Sept 89-June 90 COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND FOOD STUDIES

Two year diploma in culinary arts, food service and advanced pastry (Belfast U.K)

Stages

EL DESCO

One month stage at this two star Michelin restaurant. (Verona Italy 1998)

CLARKES RESTAURANT

One month 'stage' under Sally Clarke, the London protégé of Alice Waters (London U.K. 1994)

WATERSIDE INN

One week 'stage' under Michel Roux in this three star Michelin restaurant (Bray U.K. 1992)

NADELL'S PATISSERIE

Three day 'stage' under Michael Nadell at this first rate patisserie (London U.K. 1992)

Other Achievements

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD GOOD LIVING

Regular contributor to this very popular food publication

MY RESTAURANT RULES, SEVEN NETWORK

Judge on this hit reality show which required contestants to open and run a busy restaurant in each state of Australia

READY, STEADY COOK, TEN NETWORK

Chef/Presenter on this top rating fast and furious cooking show

THE BEST IN AUSTRALIA, LIFESTYLE CHANNEL

Co-presenter on this unique fun and funky cook-off involving three of Australia's best and most innovative young cooks

SUNRISE CHANNEL SEVEN NETWORK

Resident Chef for Sunrise, Australia's highest rating daily Breakfast television program

LIVE THIS CHANNEL TEN NETWORK

Resident Chef & presenter for channel tens

Live This screened weekly Thursday nights at 7.30 pm

SELECTOR

Contributing Food writer to this unique Life-Food Wine magazine

ESQUIRE MAGAZINE

Contributing food features writer for National Magazine 'Esquire'. Articles appearing monthly in the magazine. (London U.K. 1999)

ACORN AWARD

One of thirty National winners of the Caterer & Hotelkeeper Acorn Award, awarded to people under the age of thirty in the catering industry who are highlighted as "stars of the future". (London U.K 1999)

ASSOCIATION OF PASTRY CHEFS OF GREAT BRITAIN

One of eight National Finalists in "The Dessert of the year Competition" (London U.K. 1994)

ACADEMIE CULINAIRE DE FRANCE

"Annual Awards of Excellence 1992" British National Finalist (London U.K. 1993)

GERMAN WINE ACADEMY

Diploma and distinction of being top student in the class during this German Wine study seminar (Rhine Germany 1993)

"UNITED KINGDOM YOUNG CHEF OF THE YEAR"

Winner of this prestigious competition held for all chefs in the UK under twenty-five. Regional Finalist in 1991 (London U.K.1992)

BRITISH WINE AND SPIRIT EDUCATION TRUST

Diploma and distinction in this educational seminar (1991 Belfast U.K.)