

WIN A 3-DAY 2-NIGHT STAY AT THE EDGE BALI

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KATH TOWNSEND

BORN INTO A FAMILY OF HOTELIERS, KATH HAS SPENT HER WHOLE LIFE IN THE INDUSTRY. SHE HAS WORKED IN SOME OF SYDNEY'S BEST KNOWN RESTAURANTS, AS WELL AS WORLD-CLASS RESORTS ACROSS SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE MALDIVES. NOW THE EXECUTIVE CHEF OF MAYA UBUD RESORT, SHE RAPS ABOUT HER KITCHEN LIFE TO *hellobali*.



I started cooking when I was about eight. I tried to make marshmallows for a school fete. We never had white sugar in our house, so I made do with brown sugar. Needless to say they were rather dense and nothing like the

fluffy white ones you buy at the supermarket.

My regular comfort meal is my mum's roast lamb. It's the first meal I eat when I go home. But here in Ubud, it's chicken satay.

The most essential items in my kitchen is sea salt. I think most chefs would say that.

The worst kitchen disaster I've ever had was when I was an apprentice chef at the Sydney Opera House. We did an off-

site function at the City Hall for around 800 people, and my friend and I were in charge of the celeriac puree. We cooked it and placed it in the containers without a problem. But when we got it to the event it was bubbling! My executive chef was furious. It was a pretty stressful night.

The best dish I've tasted so far is braised rabbit with agnolotti and white truffles in Tuscany many years ago. The cook, a big Italian Mamma, came out and shaved a whole truffle over our plates. It brought tears of joy to my eyes.

My career as a chef has been a never-ending educational, culinary journey.

My favourite chef is Alice Waters, who is the only person to have had a restaurant in the top 100 since the '70s. It really takes a woman!

My favourite food critic is my general manager. He will always tell it like it is!

My signature dish is tuna sashimi with *sambal matah* – fresh tuna marinated in a salsa of lemongrass, kaffir and shallot, with lime-chilli ice. The combination of the raw tuna and Bali's favourite *sambal* is perfect. With the addition of the granita, it satisfies the palate nicely.

My biggest fear as a chef is someone not being happy with their meal.

My love for food is endless. Food and what I can create with it makes me very happy.

• RUNI INDRANI

VIETNAMESE BANANA BLOSSOM SALAD

serves 6

INGREDIENTS

- 1 young banana blossom
- 1 star fruit, cut into thin stars
- 1 tsp coarsely *toran rau ram* (Vietnamese mint)
- 1 tbs grated ginger
- 1 carrot, julienned
- ½ white onion, finely sliced
- 1 tbs coriander leaves
- 1 tbs mint leaves
- 1 tbs toasted and lightly crushed peanuts
- 1 tbs fried shallots
- 12 cooked king prawns, peeled, deveined with tail on
- ½ cup Nuoc Mam Cham

nuoc mam cham

- 75ml fresh coconut juice
- 1 tsp white sugar
- 1 tsp rice vinegar
- 1 red chilli, chopped finely
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2tbs lime juice
- 2tbs fish sauce

METHOD

To make the nuoc mam cham, bring the coconut juice, sugar and vinegar to boil. When it's cool, add chilli, garlic, fish sauce and lime juice.

Next, remove six of the outside leaves of the banana blossom. Slice cross-wise very thinly and soak in cold water with a splash of lime juice for one hour, then drain well. In a large bowl toss the blossom, onion, herbs, ginger, carrot, peanuts, prawns and half the shallots together with the dressing.

To serve, arrange the salad inside the six banana petals. Try to place the prawns around the top. Garnish with the star fruit and remaining fried shallots.

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