

Pizza, Pasta & Puttock

Chef Tobie Puttock has a passion for Italian fare which he strives to enjoy gluten free. He tells Brooke Wells why having a food intolerance doesn't mean you need to miss out.

Photographed by Mark Chew

After spending years immersed in Italian culture while working at the Hotel Florence in Italy's Lake District, Tobie Puttock ventured over to River Café in London and met his future business partner and close friend Jamie Oliver. Together they established 15 Restaurant in London with great success, with Tobie acting as Jamie's executive chef for several years, while filming the Jamie's Kitchen series. Tobie's homesickness prompted Jamie to set up another 15 restaurant in Melbourne for him to manage, where he works almost every day training chefs for the 15 Foundation while also writing cookbooks and being the resident chef on 9am with David and Kim. Additionally since meeting his wife Georgia who has irritable bowel syndrome, Tobie became involved with the Gluten Free Society, creating and adapting recipes for coeliac disease, lactose intolerance and irritable bowel syndrome sufferers.

On work and life balance...

For me a typical day normally starts at 6am with breaky and then to the restaurant where I either work on my computer, help in the kitchen or most commonly a little bit of both, cook lunch and then in between lunch and dinner I have meetings. After this I either stay on for dinner service or head home to my wife. I think like everybody I have busy weeks and calm weeks. I am very lucky that I am surrounded by good people so when I am not in the kitchen I know it's running smoothly because head chef Warren has worked with me for five years and knows how I like things. But after 18 years in the kitchen I have learnt to say

no to things and started to stay at home a few nights a week to have a semi-normal life with my wife.

On Jamie Oliver...

He lives in London so I don't get to see him too much but we chat every week or so. Our relationship is probably friends before work although we mostly talk about work.

On living in Italy as an apprentice...

I think spending time in Italy has helped me to understand flavour combinations. I eat Italian food more or less all of the time because I love it. I can still speak Italian but not fluently.

On chef mentors...

Maurice Terzini and everyone I was surrounded by during my apprenticeship were a huge influence and have shaped my career. I also really admire Mario Batali.

On recreation...

In the beginning snowboarding was one of my reasons for working in Italy and Switzerland so that I was close to the ski villages and could go snowboarding in my spare time. I like cooking and snowboarding so I have always tried to tie the two in. I still snowboard as much as possible and when I am not able to do that I try to ride my bike as much as possible.

On future projects...

I am working on another book at the moment and focusing my time at 15 in Melbourne and the third intake of trainee chefs for the 15 Foundation who began in September last year and the rest is a secret!



Best mates Jamie Oliver and Tobie Puttock... "More or less any recipe can be adapted (to be gluten free), even traditional Italian dishes such as pasta, pizza and bread".

On must-have ingredients for Italian food...

Olive oil, fresh herbs, good quality cheese.

On gluten free cooking...

I realised I could help friends and family through cooking and that makes me feel good. I love being involved with the Irresistible Gluten Free Show and working with Sue Shepherd to adapt Italian recipes to be gluten free is amazing. More or less any recipe can be adapted, even traditional Italian dishes such as pasta, pizza and bread.

On living with food intolerances...

I think everyone should follow a healthy balanced diet, and if you have a particular intolerance you need to tailor it to that, and if not you should enjoy everything in moderation. My wife is a semi-vegetarian so at home we try to eat things like grilled fish and generally healthy food. I am a sucker for chocolate.

On creativity...

I think it all comes down to planning really. I always find it hard to cook if I have the night off work but I often plan on Sundays and buy some ingredients for the rest of the week, so the food is there ready to go. I am constantly researching recipes through books. I have lots of books. Life is my inspiration. ❤️

Spaghetti with breadcrumbs, chilli and olive oil

Serves: 4



Ingredients

400 g dried spaghetti
A small handful of homemade coarse breadcrumbs, ideally made from ciabatta
1/3–1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
3–6 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1–2 fresh long red chillies, seeded and finely chopped
A handful of flat-leaf parsley, stalks finely chopped and leaves roughly chopped
3 anchovy fillets
1/2 cup freshly grated pecorino
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. Cook the spaghetti in boiling salted water until al dente.
2. Toast the breadcrumbs in a dry frying pan over medium heat until crisp, then set aside.
3. Place the olive oil, garlic, chillies, parsley stalks and anchovies in a frying pan. Warm the oil very gently over low heat for 2–3 minutes to infuse it with the flavours of the other ingredients, taking care not to brown the garlic. Remove the pan from the heat.
4. Drain the cooked spaghetti, then add it to the olive oil mixture, along with the chopped parsley leaves, breadcrumbs and grated pecorino.
5. Season to taste with sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Toss to coat the spaghetti with the other ingredients and serve immediately.

Variations for wellbeing

Dairy intolerance, lactose intolerance – Enjoy as is.
Gluten intolerance – Use gluten-free pasta and gluten-free bread
IBS – Use gluten-free pasta and gluten-free bread; reduce oil by half.

Recipe taken from "Italian Local" by Tobie Puttock, published by Penguin Lantern.