

Taste & Travel

TREKKING IN INDIA | EATING FISH LIVERS | AUSSIE SPIRITS | FOOD & TRAVEL UPDATES



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There are no tales of familial culinary inspiration in the personal book of Matt Moran's gravitation to cooking. No, for this once rough and tumble country kid, it was simply a way out. Raised on standard rustic cooking that meant daily meat and three veg, Moran's entree into the kitchen, he says, was a way out; a trade that would allow him to leave school.

"I saw cheffing as a job," he says today. "And it wasn't until I started actually cooking, using fresh produce and learning, that *I fell in love with it.*" The etiquette of a commercial kitchen made the biggest impact on the 45-year-old. "I had no discipline until I had my butt kicked in the kitchen," he says, "I thrived on it. It was bloody hard work, *90 hours, six days a week* – but I just thought that was normal."

As it turns out, the skills of classic French cookery, acquired during his apprenticeship at Sydney's La Belle Helene, still provide the basis of his cooking style.

Given his current empire of seven restaurants, a catering company, newspaper columns, books and Foxtel series, Paddock to Plate, it's obvious those same 90 hour weeks of hard graft remain. "Well, *work isn't work when it's a passion.* I was mentoring some kids a few years ago and one asked 'how long will it take me to learn everything?'".

The question prompted Moran to pause: "I've been doing it 25 years and *I still have no idea,*" boomed the reply. Such words also provide further insight into the backbone of Moran's success: humility and a thirst for knowledge. "You're always learning – the moment you think you know everything is the moment you've lost the fight."

Talk to Moran and invariably the conversation will steer towards the wealth of fortune we have as Australians – particularly as it relates to cooking and the raw materials on offer.

"We have the most amazing produce here," he says. "It's why we're now up there with everyone in the world. As a chef, to be able to work with that is incredible. It's given us the confidence to hold our own with any other country on Earth." He's also seen a strong shift in our social constructs – certainly in regard to men in the kitchen.

"When I was young, it was always mum in the kitchen – I guess it was for a lot of us back then – but we've moved on from that. Now *men are either cooking or are genuinely interested in cooking...* And if they're not, time to pull out your fingers, men, because cooking is a beautiful thing, and knowing even the basics can change your life."



THE RECIPE

Beef rib roast with mustard & parsley crust

INGREDIENTS SERVES 4-6

400G WHOLEGRAIN MUSTARD
1 BUNCH FLAT-LEAF PARSLEY, ROUGHLY
CHOPPED
20G SALT FLAKES
2.5KG BEEF RIB ROAST (4 RIBS)

"I've been doing this dish for years now – it has a beautiful flavour and the crust has great texture, while also seasoning the meat thanks to all the salt. It looks impressive when you bring it to the table, like a big crown roast."

Preheat the oven to 220°C. Combine the mustard, parsley and salt in a bowl.

Place the beef on a wire rack in a roasting pan. Use a spoon to spread the mustard mixture over the top of the beef in a smooth, even layer.

Roast the beef for 20 minutes, until the mustard layer has started to form a crust, then reduce the oven temperature to 180°C and roast for a further 45 minutes to 1 hour, until cooked to your liking. (For a medium-rare roast, the core temperature on a meat thermometer will be 51°C.)

Take out of the oven, cover loosely with foil, then it's really important to **let the meat rest for 30 minutes** or so before slicing to serve.

MORAN'S TOP ROASTING TIPS

THE CUT

"I've used a gorgeous 21-day dry-aged, grass-fed four-rib rack. Essentially, it's scotch fillet with the bone on. It's one of the best cuts to slow roast because the meat is sweeter around the bone. Anything cooked on the bone will take a little longer, but if you prefer to give the bone a miss, I love roasting a whole rump too."

THE CRUST

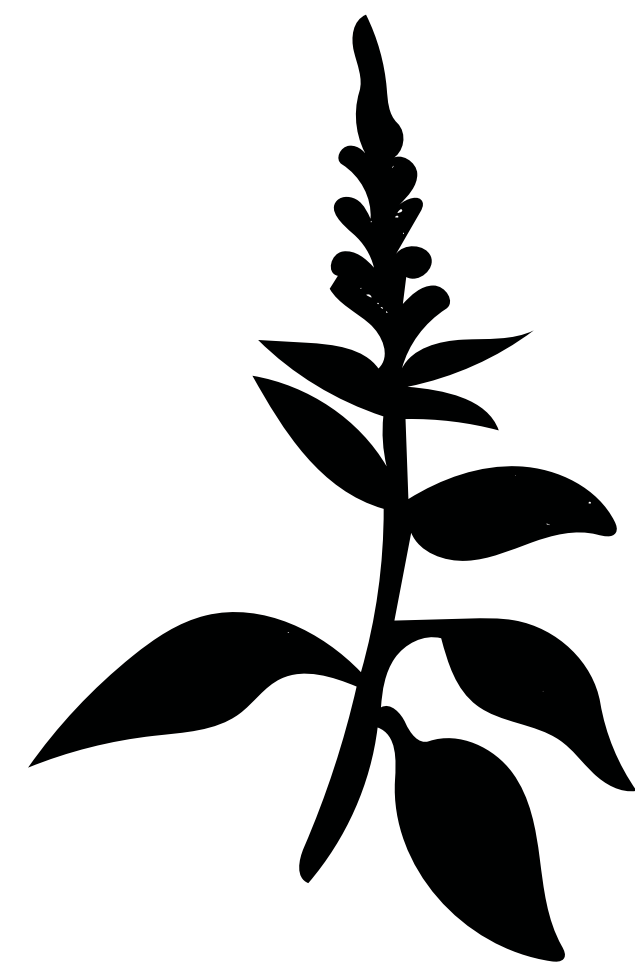
"Everyone likes roast beef with mustard. I decided to do a bit of a twist on that theme by putting a mustard crust on top of the beef. This brings in those classic flavour combinations and adds another texture to the dish."

HERBS

There's nothing better than fresh herbs so, if you're not already, grow some yourself. Stuck in an apartment with no outdoor space? No bother – grab a small tray and have them on the windowsill. As long as you have access to sun and water them every day, there's no reason they won't grow.

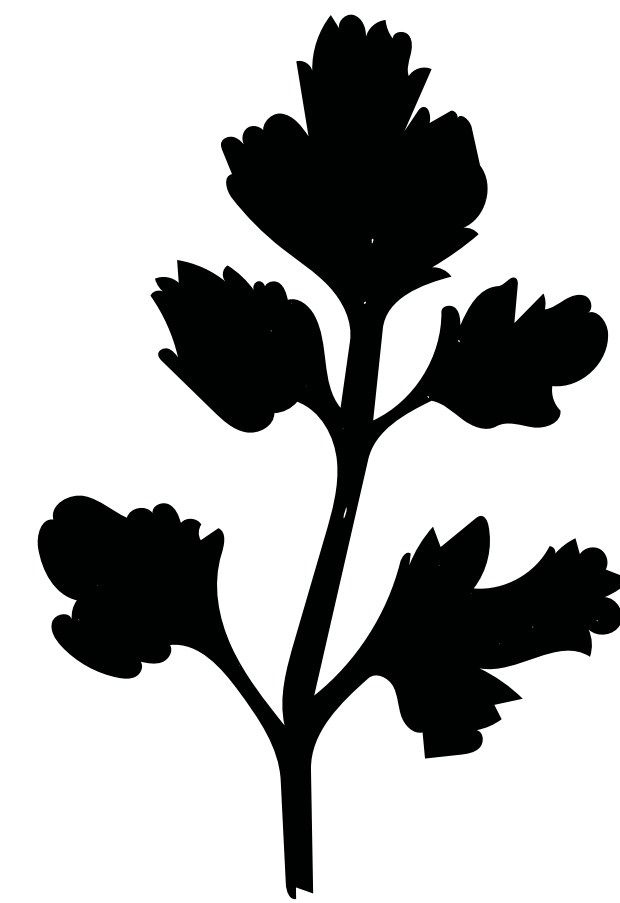
BASIL

"Basil needs as much fertiliser as possible but don't over water it. Too much water will ruin it. I get a real buzz from picking my own basil and tomatoes, and plating them with mozzarella and balsamic, knowing I've grown it all myself."



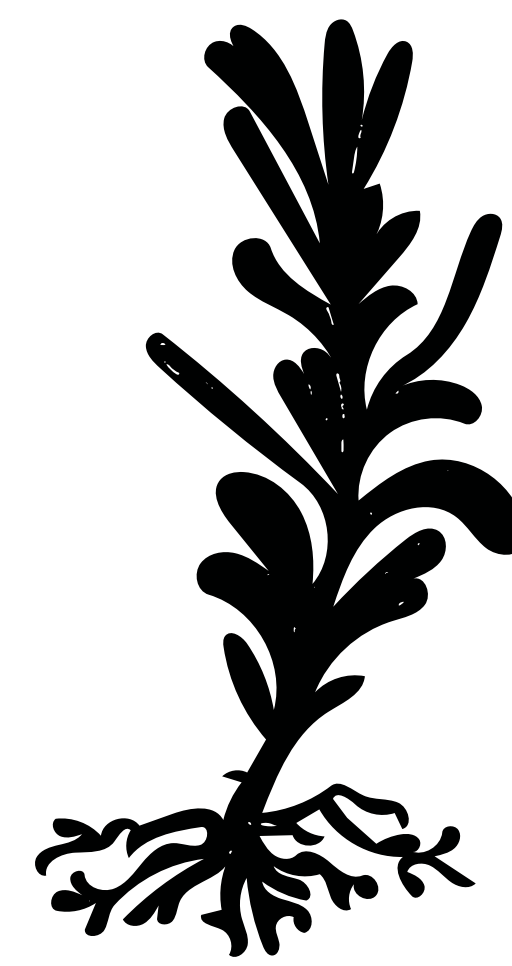
PARSLEY

"This is a herb you can use daily. Make sure it gets good sun, but don't let it get out of control as it's essentially a weed and will grow fast. Just try to contain it so it doesn't take over."



ROSEMARY

"It's one of the toughest herbs, so if you get this one wrong you're really not looking after it. Rosemary brings depth and fragrance to meats, vegetables, just about anything."



THE KIT

"The most important thing, of course, is to have a sharp knife in the first place," says Moran. "You get that by sliding it along the stone until you have a beautiful edge. Really, it's about putting it on the steel **every time** you use it. You're only as good as your tools – right?"

Maybe **not**. Still, having a sharp blade is key to good cooking. Time, then, to go and buy yourself a sharpening stone or blade sharpener. Whenever you go into a butchers, they're always putting a knife on the steel. To keep yours sharp, don't throw it in the utensils drawer because once you knock the edges, they become blunt. Instead, keep them in a pouch or roll them up into a bag and look after the edge."



Stainless steel
'Cook's' knife \$159,

WHERE TO EAT

Moran's Favourite Restaurants (that he doesn't already own)

1 SUPERNORMAL Melbourne

"I've been here a couple of times and love everything about it. [Chef/owner] Andrew McConnell is a fantastic operator. Modern Asian, clean flavours and really well executed. And not just the food – Andrew has a great eye for detail in regards to design as well."

180 Flinders Lane; supernormal.net.au



2 BINCHO Singapore

"This is a Japanese yakitori place tucked away down a laneway. Every time I'm in Singapore I eat here. They grill things over hot coals like chicken heart, livers, wings, skitail in regards to design as well."

78 Moh Guan Tce; bincho.com.sg



3 MARY'S Sydney's Newtown and CBD

"It's hard to beat a Mary's burger – they're pretty damn incredible. The 'Breakfast Burger' they do in the city – hash brown, egg, cheese, trashcan bacon, pork shoulder sausage and maple syrup – is unbelievable."

6 Mary St, Newtown; 154 Castlereagh St



4 CALI PRESS Sydney's Bronte

"I go here a lot to get a beautiful fresh juice and salad. It's not fine dining, it's a small place doing great simple, fresh and healthy food, and it's down at Bronte, what more do you need?"

140b MacPherson St; calipress.com.au

