



Curry classroom



Anna's Food Life:

A childhood food memory: At school we'd have this cornflake tart - made with a pastry base then jam then cornflakes and toffee on the top. I also really loved my mum's shepherd's pie.

The last meal you ate: Really sad - a not-very-nice WeightWatchers ten-point curry ready meal. I snack on Snack-a-Jacks with banana on top!

Restaurant you return to time and again: The Punchbowl - our village pub which does a fine fish and chips! I like the Black Bull at Corbridge - and as a family we hit the Chinese buffet at the Metrocentre.

A memorable meal: It's about place as much as food - we stayed in Benhavis in Spain and went to a restaurant with amazing views. It was just a big, happy family meal - with a guy playing bad 80s songs on sax in the square.

An inspirational chef: My mum Felicity - for that pie and the curries inspired by her own childhood. As for celeb chefs, I love Jamie Oliver - he is a natural on telly and his food seems like you can cook it. I like Gizzi Erskine too - she's a very cool lady.

Favourite drink: I like Wairu sauvignon blanc from New Zealand - but it really makes me sneeze so I don't drink it very often. I've recently switched to Hendricks gin and a slice of cucumber!

Favourite food/ingredient: Oh chocolate! The ultimate sticky, choccie thing with meringue, nuts, drenched in cream...

Your last meal: Fish and chips with mushy peas and curry sauce and a pint of lager - then followed by coffee and some kind of chocolate cake/double vanilla cake thing, as I am obviously not calorie-counting!



Anna Foster's life is one of those very juggle-ish ones. She's got three kids, a fire-fighter husband on shifts and a job which sees her rise at 4.30am every day.

Add to the list Henry, the walk-demanding dog, a house in the sticks and a passion for singing that MUST be fulfilled and even the word exhausting doesn't seem to cut it.

Anna is the breakfast host on Magic FM in the North East. She is full of bounce and smiles when she dons her apron for a stint in Bob Arora's curry classroom at Sachins in Newcastle.

Completely undaunted by a pan, a spoon and an awesome array of spice pots before her, Anna gets stuck in like a pro.

As a mum of three - Jamie is 15, Zara, 13, and Yasmin, 11 - it is very heartening to hear that she does not add Nigella-like kitchen skills to her list of accomplishments. Letting husband Steve do the cooking is fine by her. As guilty as she feels - like many a working mum - she isn't about to add an exhaustive menu of bake-off worthy dishes to the family teatime menu any day soon.

"I love food - but I am on WeightWatchers at the moment - I am good at cooking things in big pots - chilli, curry, shepherd's pie - those family basics," she says "Steve had a heart by-pass op last year and has become a vegetarian since then - so I cook

When your day starts at 4.30am it means that tucking into a curry by noon is no big deal. Bob Arora cooks it up with Magic breakfast show presenter Anna Foster

with vegetables and Quorn a lot."

It's understandable that a stint at the cooker is perfunctory rather than pleasurable for Anna.

"I am up at 4.30 and in the office for 5.30. I might 'finish' at 11.30 or I might be doing some presenting, or prep for something or a charity thing - then it's a 50-minute journey home - I don't do a lot of cooking!"

At the moment her passion is the Magic Choir. A keen soprano, Anna adores singing but was spurred on to make something more of this passion after an off-the-cuff suggestion on air that an amateur choir be formed. The response was incredible - and the Magic Choir was born. It's a case of enthusiastic amateurs coming along to rehearsals - there's still time if you're an interested reader - and basking in the feel-good atmosphere of a good singalong. Anna has even managed to get a slot at Sage, Gateshead for the gala performance pre-Christmas which will be in aid of the Cash for Kids charity.

All this because she hasn't really got much on her plate in her spare time!


"I love to sing and have been amazed by the reaction to

the idea of the Magic Choir - it's brilliant," she laughs, as she stirs her fresh curry leaves into the frying pan.

Curry is a real favourite in Anna's household. Her mum lived in India as a child and always cooked great curries when Anna was a child so she grew up loving them. Anna talks to Bob about a delicacy called idlis which her mum always mentions - Bob shows us a photo of one on his phone - it's a delicate, fluffy rice cake, not often seen in this country.

"Mum loves fish curries in particular - I'd say that curry is pretty much the favourite thing in our house!"

As a child Anna went to the boarding school near Thirsk which was run by her headteacher parents. Her happiest food memory from then is a sticky cornflake cake dessert. These days it's rare for Anna to eat out - she's happy to hole up in Edmundbyers with the family all weekend - but after wowing at the curry classroom she may well be stirring things up with a song at the stove.

 Join Anna's Magic Choir at Gateshead Town Hall Thursday evenings. www.magic1152.co.uk

On the menu: Singing Salmon Johl

What it's got going for it: Bengali dish with distinctive flavour from black mustard, fenugreek and fennel seeds
The trick: Fresh curry leaves in the sauce give a real lift

Ingredients

Serves four:

- 4 salmon fillets
- 4 tbsp rice flour

Marinade:

- 6 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp pureed garlic and ginger paste
- 1/4 tsp chilli powder
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 2 tsp paprika
- Pinch salt

Sauce

- 4 tbsp vegetable oil
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- Handful of fresh curry leaves
- 2 pinches black mustard seeds
- 1 pinch fenugreek seeds
- 1 pinch fennel seeds
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1/4 tsp chilli powder
- 1/4 tsp turmeric
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- 3 large onions, diced
- 1/4 tsp garlic and ginger paste
- 1/4 ltr water
- Salt to taste
- 4 medium-sized tomatoes, diced



Method

Salmon

Make the marinade for the salmon by combining all the marinade ingredients and then cover the salmon in the marinade. Leave for about an hour. Remove the salmon from the marinade then coat each fillet in rice flour and set aside.

Sauce

Place the oil in a pan with the cinnamon sticks and bay leaves. After a short time you will hear a 'pop' as the flavours infuse into the oil. When this happens, remove the spices from the pan. Add all the mustard, fenugreek and fennel seeds to the pan with the diced onion and garlic and ginger paste. Stir until the mixture resembles a paste. Add a little

water if it is too thick. Stir for a few minutes then add the tomatoes. Cook until the tomatoes soften and add the paprika, chilli powder, turmeric and black pepper. Continue cooking - gradually add about a quarter litre of water. You are looking for the texture of a chunky, rustic-looking sauce. The sauce will be cooked in about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat some oil in a frying pan and when hot add the salmon fillets - which have been coated in flour. Cook for about five minutes and turn once. The cooking time will depend on how thick the fillets are but no more than ten minutes. Once they are cooked, place the fillets on a plate and drizzle with the sauce. Serve with rice and naan bread.



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