



Curry classroom

Hotshot bowler Steve Harmison boasts that he's the only player who put on weight on tour. No stranger to spice, he gets to grips with the craft of the kofta



When it comes to food, cricketer Steve Harmison makes no apologies for bingeing on a burger and a few pints in the midst of a Test series.

The body of a fast bowler is a different kind of temple to that of a finely-honed sprinter or dedicated gymnast.

Quite simply theirs is a gruelling job, standing on a cricket pitch for hours. "You need fuel. Pizzas, burgers, steaks, protein. I'm not saying that wasn't frowned upon but you're standing in a field from 8.30am 'til 8pm in 40 degree heat for six days at push - you regulate what you eat and you know what you need - you burn it

off and you need the fuel, we're grown men. "I'll have a big breakfast and will eat lunch - not everyone does that, but you find out what works for you."

Durham bowler, Harmy, aka, the Ashington Express, is set to retire from cricket at the end of this season and is currently in the midst of a successful benefit year. As a two-times Ashes winner, the now 35-year-old Harmy was first included in the England set-up in 1998 and went on to make 121 international appearances, including 63 Test Matches. His most memorable haul took place at Sabina Park in Jamaica, where he took 7-12 in 2004. After being ranked number one bowler in the world he was also named as one of the five Wisden

Cricketers of the Year in 2005.

Harmy has represented Durham County Cricket Club in 171 limited overs matches and over 200 first class matches. His most memorable moments came in 2008 and 2009 when, after summers of outstanding performances, he went on to clinch the final wicket both times Durham won their County Championship titles.

So this summer, with the Ashes glory on home turf, has been a memorable one in many respects.

"It was great cricket between great sides and for the players it was one of the most enjoyable games because it was a great spectacle. It was brilliant for the North East and something to really be built on.

Steve's Food Life

A childhood food memory: Christmas dinner at home - I have a big family - there were five of us kids - and at Christmas the food just kept coming and coming - I don't know how my mam did it!

Mam's mince and dumplings is pretty good too - crispy dumplings!

The last meal you ate: Last night in the canteen at Sky TV studios - lamb dinner - on a plastic tray with plastic knives and forks - very classy!

A restaurant you return to time and again: Verdi's in Bedlington. The kids love it, the owner makes a fuss of them and we all love the food.

I went to The Ivy recently for an appearance - I'd been really unwell so I only had bread and water which was very disappointing!

A memorable meal: In Mumbai I was taken for a meal by the wicket-keeper Farouk Engineer. He took us to what was basically a Portakabin in a back street - and it was one of the most fantastic meals I have ever eaten.

I also remember never liking sushi or wanting to try it - Andrew Flintoff would take the mick and say I was a backward Northerner for not liking it - we played 'blind sushi' - eventually I got to like it!

Inspirational chef: Probably Ramsay - he's amusing - a man with a bit of power.

Best wine? I am a lager drinker - but I like a glass of Cloudy Bay.

Favourite food: Sticky toffee pudding - my Uncle Mel runs the Anglers Arms up near Guide Post. He makes the best STP and it's a great pub!

Last meal: Fish and chips, mushy peas, a pint, sticky toffee pud.

"The crowd was amazing. They drag you up - footballers from Newcastle and Sunderland will always say this about a North East crowd and it is so true. When things are not going your way, the atmosphere a crowd can generate is really electric, really phenomenal."

There's no question of Steve not being involved in the game - he's got as many years ahead of him as he has had playing and is relishing what comes next.

He's done his coaching badges and is a regular on television and radio which he really enjoys. "I can talk and talk about cricket, it's what I know.

"In terms of coaching - it isn't a given that because you play well you can be a good coach or that you have a right to be one." He rocks up to Sachins for our cooking session after a delayed flight from London where he'd been taking part in a Sky Sports show with Sarah-Jane Mee alongside Greg Rusedski, Ollie Holt and golfer Mickey Walker.

He's comfortable in the TV spotlight and unfazed by the limelight - even if it's at one of the cooking demos he does with Bob. His summer has been a busy one in the role of Dad as much as cricketer hero, ferrying about his daughters Emily, 15, Abbie, ten, Isabel, seven and little Charlie, five.


"I hear the word Dad and I just pick up the car keys and wallet," he laughs. Cricketing life has seen him spend long spells away from the family home - a renovated listed building at Woodhorn near Ashington - up to four months at a time during overseas tours. He's seen the world - and eaten a fair bit of it.


"Stick to local food - that's the one thing I



learned - pie and chips in India is never going to work - I will eat what the locals are eating. You never escape the odd dodgy stomach but I love eating and have had some great food - I am the one who goes on tour and puts on weight - I love food. It's like Guinness in Ireland - Indian food is fantastic in India. He has some good food stories - how a trip to McDonald's in Lahore, Pakistan for five of the squad literally became a military operation - the restaurant was closed down because of security fears and the players were taken in their armoured coach - with a full armed police entourage. The restaurant stayed closed for several hours so the players could satisfy their Big Mac needs. On tour members of the squad were also

called on to make visits to charity projects - which Steve loved. "Sometimes you will go along to an orphanage and have a game of cricket with the kids and the smiles on their faces are amazing - I love that - so simple but memorable. I really struggle though going to hospitals in the aftermath of the earthquake in Pakistan and seeing injured children. I was in bits - you can do your bit, help shift some rubble or whatever but seeing the kids without basic equipment was tough."

 Details of events for Steve's benefit year are on www.harmy611benefit.co.uk

 Bob Arora owns Sachins, Forth Banks, Newcastle. www.sachins.co.uk

On the menu: Kofta Harmi Masala



Ingredients

Serves four (two meatballs each)

500g	lamb mince		Pinch cracked black peppercorns
3 tbsp	yellow lentils		garam masala
4 tbsp	poppy seeds	1 1/4 tsp	Pinch salt
2	large onions, diced	1 1/2 tsp	tomato puree
	Oil for frying		Fresh coriander, chopped
1 tsp	garlic/ginger paste	200ml	water
3/4 tsp	turmeric	50 ml	single cream
1 1/4 tsp	chilli powder		

Method

Koftas

Dry fry the lentils for a couple of minutes in a pan - be careful not to burn - then add the poppy seeds for another minute. Remove from heat and then blend to a fine powder. Place the mince in a bowl and add the powder mixture and mix. Add 1 tsp chilli powder, 1 tsp garam masala and a pinch of salt. Mix the ingredients thoroughly then shape into small balls. Add some oil to a frying pan and brown off the koftas. Turn the heat down and put a lid on the pan, let them cook gently for about ten minutes.

Masala

Sweat the onions in a frying pan and add the dry ingredients. Let the onions caramelise and once soft add the tomato puree and some water to the mixture. Add water to the mixture gradually and let the sauce cook for about ten minutes. Once the sauce is cooked remove from the heat and add the cream - you can make the sauce as thick or thin as you prefer. Blend the sauce in a blender then add it to the pan with koftas in it. Move the koftas and sauce to a serving dish and sprinkle with coriander. Serve with rice and naan bread.

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