



# Curry classroom

## Jamie's Food Life:

**Childhood food memory:** Home-made fish fingers.

There were six of us - so piles of fish fingers!

**Last meal you ate:** Chicken with gnocchi - a few of the guys were round and we were playing COD. The meal was a concoction of things from the fridge. Been injured for 14 weeks - so playing a lot of COD!

**A restaurant you return to time and again:** A place called Lone Star in Auckland, New Zealand is a favourite and it does variations on the classics like ribs - and a dish called Shanks for the Memory - braised lamb shanks with mash.

**Memorable meal:** In New Zealand we have something called 'hangi'. To 'lay a hangi' involves digging a pit in the ground, heating stones in the pit with a large fire, placing baskets of food on top of the stones, and covering everything with earth for several hours before uncovering the hangi. It's like a reverse barbecue - the meat cooks for hours then you have lots of dishes like chop suey, pork with coconut cream.

**Inspirational chef:** Got to say Bob after this cooking lesson!

**Favourite drink:** I don't drink alcohol so I'd have to say a good banana milkshake.

**Favourite food or ingredient:** Steak, medium-rare.

**Your last meal:** Fish tacos and ribs then a 2kg steak with roasties and fresh salad. Dessert would be something with custard - walnut apple Christmas cake.

## Alex's Food Life:

**Childhood food memory:** There were four of us kids so it was survival of the fittest when it came to meal times. Family roasts always good - I love pigs in blankets.

**Last meal you ate:** My wife's home-made lasagne, she was going out and left it for me - also a banoffee pie which I just managed to resist.

**Restaurant you return to time and again:** I like going to As You Like It in Jesmond - love the ribs there.

**Memorable meal:** Grenoble - snow, log cabin and a fondue always makes a great combination.

**Inspirational chef:** Got to say Gordon Ramsay!

**Favourite drink:** Cider - a flagon of real Herefordshire cider - even though I am from Somerset. It looks a bit toxic and blows your head off, not for the faint-hearted.

**Favourite food:** Pigs in blankets!

**Your last meal:** Pate, beef Wellington with pigs in blankets then cheesecake.

Raising the steaks. Rugby players and their meat. A serious protein fix for Newcastle Falcons' players Jamie Helleur and Alex Crockett who turn up the heat in the Sachins' kitchen



At 10am most mornings you'll find Alex Crockett and Jamie Helleur tucking in to a meal most of us would only consider appropriate far later in the day - and with a glass of wine by its side.

Chicken, broccoli, beans and more vegetables at a time when the rest of us are still cranking up with a mid-morning caffeine boost.

No, these boys are not pupils of the latte and a Twix school of nutrition.

As professional rugby players with Newcastle Falcons, by 10am they are well on with the daily grind of intensive training.

The big breakfast is an interval between weights sessions, game analysis, field training and team sessions and one of two meals that the players have at the training ground every day.

"We burn a lot of energy so we need to eat a lot of food," says Jamie Helleur. The 30-year-old from New Zealand has been with the squad for three seasons now and plays centre with Alex Crockett, 32, from Bath, who is in his second season with the Falcons.

Alex and his wife live in 'party-central' Jesmond in a place they bought before the arrival of their little boy Digby, who is now eight months old.

Life has quietened down for them since his arrival in some ways - if they're up all night it's because of milk and nappies not partying.

As much as we joke about Alex sharing his looks with superstar chef Gordon Ramsay, the reality is that he doesn't quite share his cooking skills.

Both he and Jamie admit to being amateurs in the kitchen - Alex leaves the cooking to his wife - though Jamie's acquired the New Zealand skill of being able to deal with food as long as the outdoors and a grill are involved.

It means that once they've got the aprons on at Sachins, they're both willing kitchen apprentices.

Jamie gets to grips with marinating the steaks with the fiery spice blend while Alex cooks up the onions and tomatoes that will form the finished dish.

They form an easy double act, keen to learn more about the techniques involved in Indian cooking and the different spices that are used to create the dishes.

Creating a traditional sauce from scratch is something that at first is time-consuming and seems complicated.

The reality is that once you get into the habit of knowing the ingredients and having them to hand, it is pretty simple to be able to create an authentic curry from scratch - or so owner Bob Arora advocates.

Jamie has been nursing an injury so he has had to spend more time at home - that can involve more than a little time with a console and a game of Call of Duty with his friends and team-mates.

On those full-on 'lads' nights in, food often means a concoction of whatever's in the fridge - Jamie's 'surprise'. Next time, with newly acquired skills, it might well be a Sachins' masala - worth a try you might say.

**Bob Arora owns Sachins, Forth Banks, Newcastle. [www.sachins.co.uk](http://www.sachins.co.uk)**





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## On the menu: Falcon Beef Masala

**What it's got going for it:** Beef with a peppercorn sauce is normally a bistro rather than Indian restaurant speciality. This keeps beef as the main player but spices things up a bit.

**The trick:** Peppercorns add the spice to many an Indian dish and this makes for a twist on the traditional masala.

### Ingredients

#### Serves 4

4 steaks of your choice - rump, sirloin, ribeye - 21-day-aged beef for flavour  
 Vegetable oil  
 2 tbsp peppercorns, crushed  
 8 large tomatoes, chopped in half and de-skinned  
 Slug of brandy  
 6 medium onions, finely chopped  
 2 tsp garlic and ginger paste  
 1/2 tsp salt  
 1 tsp turmeric  
 1 tsp chilli flakes  
 1/2 ltr water  
 50g butter  
 4tbsp double cream  
 Fresh coriander, chopped

### Method

#### Steak

Take the salt, half the chilli flakes, and 1 tsp garlic/ginger paste and mix together then spread the mixture on to the steaks and leave while you prepare the sauce.

#### Sauce

Heat a tablespoon of oil in a pan then add the peppercorns for a minute. Add the brandy to pan and burn off the alcohol with a flame.

Add the onions to the peppercorn mixture then add 1 tsp garlic/ginger paste, the turmeric and the remaining chilli flakes to the mixture and let the onions soften.

Add a little water if it sticks to the pan.

In a separate pan, add the tomatoes and cook gently until they are softened. Then add the tomatoes to the onion mixture. Again, add a small amount of water to loosen the mixture if necessary.

Once it is cooked through (about 10-15 minutes), put the sauce in a blender and blend until smooth.

Add the double cream and 25g butter to the smooth mixture and leave on a very low heat while the steaks are cooked.

Heat the remaining butter in a frying pan and cook the steaks to your liking.

Place on a plate and pour the spicy peppercorn sauce over the meat to serve.

Sprinkle with coriander.

Rice and naan bread are good accompaniments.

