

## Breakfast with Brian

Brian Turner talks to [Lucie Parker](#) about delicious breakfasts, student cooking and the joys of the Yorkshire pudding

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Brian Turner CBE is a British chef who has spread his Michelin-star culinary magic back to his home county of Yorkshire in order to tackle one thing: the decline of the breakfast.

Recent research has shown that 47% of the British population skip breakfast at some point during the week, and that 15% of people never eat it. Furthermore, 32% of children regularly miss breakfast. So, there is certainly a serious discrepancy between the universal mantra of breakfast as the most important meal of the day, and putting this theory into practice by whipping up a solid plate or bowlful every morning.

For Brian, whose fundamental career inspiration was assisting his dad every morning in providing “heart-warming breakfasts of bacon, sausages, and egg” for those who passed through their family owned café in Leeds, these stats need a change for the British to “retain the energy” we are apparently lacking because of our bad breakfast habits.

Raised in Halifax, West Yorkshire, and subsequently mentored by Michael Smith, food writer and broadcaster, Brian was rapidly catapulted into the culinary industry and has since forged the lengthy list of achievements that justify his title as one of Britain’s most successful chefs.

A strong television personality epitomised by his continual presence on Ready Steady Cook, Brian has set up restaurant after restaurant, asserting his food dominance in a smorgasbord of places: Knightsbridge and the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Birmingham’s NEC included.

Honorary doctorates from Thames Valley University, Leeds Met, and Sheffield Hallam for his commitment to catering all contribute to the notable mark he has stamped upon this industry, culminating in him being awarded a CBE in 2002 to celebrate his outstanding talents and contribution.

So, there’s nothing lacklustre about Brian Turner. Yet, having reached the top of the food chain, so to speak, the time has come for the culinary baton to be passed on to others. “It just makes common sense for people to cook; eating and drinking well enables you to look after yourself in a healthy way”. This is the justification behind Brian’s goal of getting Britain’s younger generation involved in “the greatest

industry”.

In today’s discombobulating world, the importance of good food is a prerequisite to healthy living. So, the question on the lips of every student, where pesto pasta has become a monotonous feature of a terribly irregular diet, is how to include variety when on a budget.

His answer is simple. “When I was living in London before breaking into the food world, I used to buy minced meat, potatoes, onions, carrots, stock cubes and tinned tomatoes. These ingredients are the basis for three different meals: a minced meat dish with potatoes, a shepherd’s pie for the next day, and finally a soup for the day after”. Problem solved.

The ability to cater for the variation of indulgent desires of the masses is the mark of a good chef. Not only has Brian focused his attention on students, but his experience also extends into satisfying the food cravings of those who frequent his multitude of restaurants. His ideal dinner party? “Margaret Thatcher, Nelson Mandela, to fulfil my strong connections to South Africa, and finally Peter Kay, so that I’d have a fellow Northerner beside me”. In continuation with his Yorkshire-bred patriotism, the dish of choice would be none other than his famous roast beef and yorkshire puddings, “on the bone of course”.

Thus, Brian can do budget and beef. However the foundation beneath these two Bs is a third, and arguably the most important: breakfast. The stepping stone that paved his way to success; breakfast holds a special place in Brian’s heart.

Although he’d like to think of himself as an “all-day person”, his 5.45am starts would be impossible without a healthy breakfast to get him going every day. Yet, being the success he is has instigated a lifetime of travelling, which simply doesn’t allow for a cooked English breakfast each morning.

The worst breakfast he’s ever had? “After watching the slaughter of cattle at 5am in a market in Lyon, we were then served with lumps of pig fat in lentils, something I just couldn’t get down”.

This experience was enough to propel Brian forward into hosting his ‘Big Yorkshire Breakfast Day’. Friday 25th January brings to Askham Bryan College, about 15 minutes’ drive outside York, a day of breakfast related delights, and is part of the nationwide Farmhouse Breakfast Week (20-26 January) created to raise awareness of the importance of eating a healthy breakfast.

Activities include a cook-off between Brian and local students, as well as a talk “advocating the use of the huge range of local produce Yorkshire has to offer”. Inspirational, entertaining, and full to the brim with culinary wisdom, Brian has something for everyone within “the industry that has treated me so well. I would recommend it to anybody”.



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