

Paul Donnelley talks food with Alice Beer



Alice Beer is best known for presenting *Watchdog*, *Face Value* and *The Holiday Programme*. She is 36, single and lives in London.

What was your favourite sweetie as a child?

I like sherbet dabs in the yellow cardboard – the one with the liquorice stick not the lolly pop – and jelly babies.

What is it now?

I still am addicted to jelly babies and jelly beans. I also love nougat.

What, and how, do you dunk?

My favourite dunk would be Marmite soldiers in soft-boiled or poached eggs. I'm allergic to wheat so I have to have wheat-free bread. I'm not a big biscuit person.

Under what circumstances did you last eat caviar?

I have a weakness for caviar or the pseudo-caviar you can get from Sainsbury's so I don't need much of an excuse to eat it. The last time I had the proper stuff was about two years ago on New Year's Eve. A girlfriend and I cooked a New Year's Eve dinner and decided to go the whole hog and we bought some caviar. It was ridiculously expensive as well.

Has anyone ever eaten anything off your body?

Not that I'm prepared to tell you.

A meteor's about to zap the earth for good. What would be your last meal?

Marmite on toast. I could go a lot worse way than chomping on some Marmite.

Why do you loathe one particular food or drink?

I don't like strawberries at all. I don't like jam very much either. I'm a savoury girl. Cheese, Marmite, stuff like that.

What was the most romantic memory you associate with food?

St Valentine's Day 2000 when I was cooked a beautiful but simple supper.

What was your worst culinary disaster?

I've had a few. I made some mashed potatoes for a dinner party and I tried to use this device my mother had given me. It was a hand blender for soup and I thought it would get the mash very creamy but they ended up like cement. It didn't matter because it wasn't a posh dinner party but everyone teased me so much. I remember drinking and wishing they would all go away.

Confess your most loathsome kitchen hygiene story.

I can't cos no one will ever come for dinner again. Suffice to say if it goes on the floor and no one's looking, it goes straight back onto the plate again. I am so clumsy in the kitchen stuff regularly goes on the floor.

Are you a cheesy football or a Japanese rice cracker sort of gal?

I am addicted to Cheesy Wotsits. Your fingers turn orange. I also love Quavers. Rice crackers you can keep them.

What was your weirdest craving/thing you've ever eaten and why?

Having not been pregnant I don't know.

Name your all-time fave takeaway dish.

It would probably be a pizza with a runny egg in the middle. I also like crispy duck and pancakes.

Agh! Sudden guests! What's your standby meal?

It's either sausage and mash or a restaurant around the corner called Buchan's.

What's the oldest thing in your cupboard or freezer?

I dread to think. Things do sit around for a long time. I have something I bought from a very posh shop when I was pretending to be posh which is two quails with apple in fat. I haven't got a clue what to do with them. I also have an egg which is way past its sell-by date.

You allergic to anything? And what happens?

I'm allergic to wheat and I blow up like a little football.

Tell me a school dinner story.

I was the dinner ladies' favourite. I could eat what I wanted and stay skinny so I didn't just have seconds, I had thirds and fourths as well. I loves Spotted Dick with custard, sponge pudding with treacle, absolutely everything. They loved me especially Mrs Jones and Miss James. I would play this game where you would hold your glass of water under the table and then while you were talking quietly throw it in someone's lap opposite. I also put a spider on this girl called Rosemary's plate and she screamed and I got into trouble.

What's the most useless kitchen gadget you possess?

It's not really a gadget but it's probably my bread bin because I'm allergic to wheat.

Anything you've always wanted to eat, but never got the chance?

Yes, the quails in my fridge.

Fried, poached, boiled, coddled or scrambled?

Poached or boiled but not scrambled.

Ever done a runner from a restaurant?

No, never. Some friends tried to persuade me to only a couple of weeks ago. They have this game where you have to do a runner but if you get caught you have to pay the bill for everybody. I couldn't do it cos I'd be so embarrassed to get caught.