

# The Sydney Morning Herald

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**LP**  
ben o'donoghue  
chef

**TD**

Having worked overseas in high-end restaurants including London's River Cafe for most of his career, Ben O'Donoghue settled in Brisbane in 2008. Last October he opened a suburban cafe, Billykart Kitchen, with his wife De-Arne. He'd developed a celebrity profile through several TV series, including Surfing the Menu which he made with Curtis Stone. The new casual dining venture is a manageable lifestyle move as he and De-Arne raise their children Ruby 11, Herb, 9, and Cash, 7. He attributes his love of cooking to his culinary savvy grandmother who lived with the family when he was a child, and the decision to become a chef to a Eureka moment making his first bearnaise sauce at 18. He'll reveal some of Singapore's best-kept food secrets with friend Tom Williams in Tom & Ben's Singapore Sling tonight on Seven.

Wish I had

A cooktop in a central island so I could stand and cook and watch everything going on in the house instead of having my back to it.

The staples

My pantry: Megachef fish sauce is my favourite one because it has quite a pure flavour. I use it to season south-east Asian curries, soups, salads and noodles. Barilla pastas in loads of different shapes are great for the kids or a quick meal. There's always an array of spices in the cupboard, generally in small jars so we use them up quickly, and they stay fresh. And there's chocolate for making muffins, just a cheap one from Aldi for cooking.

My fridge: A number of open jars of relishes and jams - our fridge is a disaster! I make my own chilli sauces so there's a few of those. Hellmann's American mustard for hot dogs because the kids love that. Heinz tomato ketchup's there in force. Lots of fruit and veg, obviously. Apples, pears, strawberries, blueberries. Bornhoffen yoghurt which we have with raspberries and honey. And there's Mainland tasty **cheese** slices for the kids' lunches. I have chicken thighs, pork and beef mince, all good for quick dinners. I might make red chicken curry with the thighs and stir-fries with the mince.

My toolkit

My KitchenAid mixer is fantastic for cakes but it has all the attachments so I make pasta, ice-cream and sausages as well. The stone mortar and pestle is a major tool used. I bought it in **Chinatown** in London and carried it all the way back. I make all our milkshakes and smoothies with a Braun stick blender. All my pots are Le Creuset. For frypans I just **buy** cheap non-stick ones and when they're ruined I just **buy** another one.

Most memorable meal

When I was working at The River Cafe in London we had a trip to Italy to source olive oil and we went to a restaurant on the side of a mountain in Alba. I had pheasant baked whole in farro which was presented at the table, then taken away, deboned and re-served. There were stuffed baked onions topped with loads of white truffle. One of the courses was simply a fried egg with white truffle shaved on top of it. There was baby goat turning on a spit in the hearth so we had some of that; it was amazing. Lots of beautiful barolo and other local wines and we all had zabaglione served from a copper bowl in glasses for dessert.

Favourite

I lived in a warehouse flat in London for a few years and I had a big solid wooden workbench put in. We needed to cut a bit out of it to put the sink in and that piece became my chopping **board**. It's been with me for 16 years now and I wouldn't like to see it go.

Secret vice

There's usually a bag of Kit Kats in the cupboard for those sneaky chocolate moments.

I'm drinking

I drink Liptons tea at home with **milk** and only drink coffee at work. I'm drinking Howard Park merlot a bit lately. I did a range of wines through **Wine** Selector so we have some Ben O'Donoghue pinot gris. I like tequila so there's a Kah

reposado (oak aged) in a Day of the Dead bottle.

Saturday night tipple:

I'd start with a cold beer, say a 28 Pale Ale from the Burleigh brewing **company**, and then go on to a nice glass of red **wine**. I love cabernet so anything from the Coonawarra's good.

Celebration:

Billecart champagne!

I'm cooking

My last dinner at home I did a saddle of lamb, stuffed with spinach and rolled and slow-roasted. I served it with some sauteed greens and potatoes and a nice bit of jus I nicked from work.

Inspiration

I get it from travelling, reading, eating out, pretty much everywhere. I just bought The Art of Fermentation by Sandor Ellix Katz which I'm enjoying. And I reckon Yotam Ottolenghi's books are great too.

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