# TV Close-Up: Gordon Ramsay

*by Eirik_Knutzen*

Chef Gordon Ramsay gets away from it all by scuba diving all over the world. He's not looking for fresh food; he's soaking up the beauty of nature and the mystery of the sea.

GORDON RAMSAY - 'For me, doing either of a 'Kitchen' TV episode is like opening up a new restaurant,' says chef Gordon Ramsay, star of 'Kitchen Nightmares' and 'Hell's Kitchen.' CNS Photo courtesy of Eric Liebowitz. "I love diving by myself, uninterrupted, where no one can reach me on their stupid BlackBerry or chase me down to find out if my teeth have been whitened," said Ramsay, 41.

"Diving is the biggest form of escapism on the Earth," he said, "I have not hit my midlife crisis yet, but I'm obsessed by surfing. Big time. I can't get enough of it."

Most amazing of all, of course, is that he also finds time to be a hands-on family man with a wife and four young children; run 14 world-class restaurants (several with multiple Michelin stars) scattered from London to New York, Dubai and Tokyo; and star in four television shows.

There are two different versions of "Hell's Kitchen" and "Kitchen Nightmares," each shot primarily in the United Kingdom or the United States.

But the family - he's been married to Tana for 11 years and the children are Megan, 9, twins Jack and Holly, 7, and Matilda, 5 - is always foremost on Ramsay's mind.

Remembering all too well his own impoverished childhood in Glasgow, Scotland, with an abusive, alcoholic father and long-neglected mother, the non-drinking head chef is now able to provide his children with a safe, secure environment in London of which he, his sister and later heroin-addicted brother could only dream.

Given his global work schedule, Ramsay might not be present at home as often as he would like, but he is never more than a phone call away. And he arranges frequent "family reunions" when he's working in Los Angeles. Production recently began on season five of "Hell's Kitchen," and he's wrapped season one of "Kitchen Nightmares."

It all fits nicely between surfing lessons in Malibu and prepping for the spring 2008 opening of his new Gordon Ramsay restaurant at The London Hotel in West Hollywood.

"Truthfully, we spend most of our time as parents teaching children not to have that level of dependency that reduces the confidence of lots of kids. We reward their talent, but we always leave them a little bit hungry," he said.

"No matter how glamorous our life seems, they need to know that what we do is work - nothing more than that," Ramsay continued. "We're not following a (child-rearing) recipe here. We want them to be children first, so I don't want them around the restaurants caramelizing peaches and doing sauterne sauces.

"More than anything, I want them to grow up normally with a love for food. I do not want them to become picky and snotty and sort of awkward teenagers."

Beyond his current activities, he plans to open Gordon Ramsay restaurants next summer at London's Heathrow Airport and in the heart of Paris.

"It's personal and I can't wait for my first-ever launch in Paris," he chuckled. "Back in my early years of training, I got my (butt) kicked there for three years. Now I'm looking forward to telling them what to do. They grew up with fine cuisine, but trust me, the French have their own crap food - like croquette monsieur."

By then, Ramsay will probably have season two of the bigger-budget American version of "Kitchen Nightmares" in the can, along with season five of the British version (which airs on BBC America).

Working without scripts, teleprompters or cue cards, Ramsay is the darling of Rupert Murdoch's FOX Network - an organization battling a potentially crippling Hollywood screenwriters' strike along with all the other networks and studios.

"For me, doing either of a 'Kitchen' TV episode is like opening up a new restaurant," he said. "I love the work that goes into running a successful restaurant, from weeding through good and bad talent to cooking something sublime.

"'Kitchen Nightmares' has aired in 120 countries so far, and I've been asked to do separate shows in France and Israel," he said. "One can find bad restaurants anywhere in the world, but I was horrified by what I came across here in the United States. I'm asked to come in and turn their businesses around, but most of them don't even clean their kitchens before my arrival. But I never throw in the towel, never walk away. I work endlessly."

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