



One of the top private chefs to some of the world's biggest celebrities, Neill Anthony is at his peak when it comes to creating culinary masterpieces

EAT YOUR HEART OUT

There comes a point in most people's careers where one has to deal with a challenging boss. Many buckle under the pressure and quit to find employment elsewhere, and when it comes to the few who have worked for the notorious Gordon Ramsay, more often than not, the heat in the kitchen has simply been too hot to handle.

For Neill Anthony, however, this was not the case. He worked as a pastry chef at well-known Restaurant Gordon Ramsay in Hospital Road, London for many years. If anything, he describes the 'tough yet rewarding' experience as one of the best he has ever had and that he wouldn't trade that time for anything else in the world.

HAM HOCK CROQUETTES WITH TRUFFLED PEA PURÉE AND FRIED QUAIL EGG

INGREDIENTS

- 3 smoked ham hocks
- Chickpea flour
- Eggs to crumb
- Panko crumbs (for some crunch!)
- 500g cooked peas
- 500 ml chicken stock
- 10 quail eggs
- Salt and freshly-ground black pepper to taste
- Truffle oil
- Pea shoots

TO PREPARE

HAM HOCKS:

1. Boil whole ham hocks in a large pot for 2 to 3 hours or until cooked (bone comes out easily).
2. Remove the hocks from the cooking liquid, and leave to cool in a bowl.
3. Reduce the cooking liquid by half, by turning up the heat.
4. Once the ham hocks have cooled, shred them with your hands.
5. Add the reduced cooking liquid to bind and moisten the shredded ham.
6. Place the ham in a cling-film lined metal tray, and cover with more cling film. Place another tray on top to weight it down before refrigerating it overnight to set.
7. Once the ham has set, remove from fridge and cut into 2 cm x 2 cm cubes.
8. Crumb the ham by coating the cubes in flour, whisked egg and Panko crumbs. Place on tray and refrigerate till needed.

PEA PURÉE:

1. Cook the peas and place in a blender.
2. Heat chicken stock in a pot (always use hot stock for purées).
3. Add chicken stock to the peas and blend slightly.
4. Add a drizzle of truffle oil, but careful not to overdo it as it is a strong flavour.

5. Blend again till smooth.

6. Season with salt and pepper, and refrigerate till needed.

TO FINISH

HAM HOCKS:

1. Heat the oil for deep frying
2. Deep fry the crumbed ham cubes till they are golden (about 4 minutes)
3. Remove from the oil and drain on paper towel.

PEA PURÉE:

1. Heat pea purée and place in a squeeze bottle or piping bag.

QUAIL EGGS:

1. Heat a teaspoon of oil in a non-stick pan.
2. Remove the top of the quail egg with a small serrated knife.
3. Pour the contents into the pan.
4. Cook for a few seconds till set, then add a small piece of butter. Cook until done but the yolk is still runny.
5. Remove the egg from the pan and place on a piece of greased cling film till needed.

TO ASSEMBLE

1. Lightly dress your pea shoots with a touch of truffle oil and spread over the plates.
2. Place three ham croquettes on each plate and top with a quail egg.
4. Add a squeeze of pea purée in the middle of the plate, in between the croquettes.
5. Top with a quail egg and serve.



COVER NEILL ANTHONY

In many ways, working his way through restaurants and learning as much as he could from the age of seventeen, was his way of making sure that a lack of formal cooking training would never hold him back. It was also his way of honouring what he'd learned from his family as a boy. His earliest food memory is being in the kitchen and being totally mesmerised while watching his mother cook a variety of meals.

'My entire family are food lovers and cooking has always been a big part of our family life growing up,' says Anthony, who was born and raised in Zimbabwe and attended high school in Magoebaskloof in Limpopo. 'My mother and grandmother have always had a passion for cooking, which is where my true love for cooking came from.'

be on top of your game, but I love cooking good food for people who appreciate it. No request is too much for me. I like to think that I can make culinary eating dreams come true.'

MICHELIN STAR-QUALITY FOOD WITH HIS OWN SIGNATURE STYLE

Anthony is now the star of *Private Chef*, a Food Network reality television show that offers viewers a glimpse into his day-to-day life. The location can be anywhere from an ocean-side villa, a game farm, or even a tiny kitchen on a yacht. And while the nature and size of the request doesn't matter, what does is the dining extravaganza he is expected to deliver time and again, in order to please even the most demanding of his clients – and there have been a few.

'KEEP THINGS SIMPLE, LOCAL AND SEASONAL'

MAKING CULINARY DREAMS COME TRUE

At one stage in his life, Anthony's dream was to become a professional golfer, until he realised his skills with a club didn't quite match his skills with a knife. But, after spending a school holiday in Cape Town visiting his sister who was working as a head chef at the time, he very quickly realised that a culinary career was the right choice for him.

He spent ten years in Europe, honing his skills in the professional kitchens of Alyn Williams, Jerome Henry, and Marcus Wareing. Anthony then returned to Cape Town to become a personal chef, cooking restaurant-quality food for clients in the comfort of their own homes, hosting supper clubs, and even taking clients on market-day experiences that would involve choosing and buying the ingredients for the meal that Anthony would later prepare.

'Being a chef is mentally and physically demanding,' he says. 'You always have to

But, it's no easy matter to produce what he describes as 'a beautiful eating experience' every single time, especially given that he often has to multitask by being the chef, the waiter, the barman, the cleaner, and the host. Indeed, it can be stressful when Anthony arrives at a venue and has to prepare, complete, or even restart the entire menu from scratch. And yet, despite the mounting pressure and crazy requests (to 'pull off a barbecue at 3 am', for example), he's able to respond quickly and calmly, and serve Michelin star-quality food with his own signature style.

'Building relationships with your clients and giving them exactly what they want, no matter how strange the request is, will always benefit you in the long run,' he says. 'It all comes down to good communication and good teamwork. Always be prepared for the unexpected. Always be professional in every opportunity you are given. Your work ethics and standards should always guide your decisions.'



FOOD FOR THE FAMOUS

Celebrities Anthony has cooked for: Madonna, Victoria Beckham, Elton John, Paul McCartney, Kylie Minogue and U2, to name just a few

Celebrities who will feature on *Private Chef*: Francois Pienaar, Kamini Pather, Matthew Gold, and many others

Favourite local restaurant: Chefs Warehouse & Canteen in Cape Town

Favourite international restaurant: Arbutus in London

Favourite dish to eat: Anything made with attention and care

Most impressive chef he's worked with: Alyn Williams because 'everything he does is simply perfection'

In Anthony's fridge right now: Milk, cheese, butter, white chocolate snow, chorizo, spring onions, sparkling water, chilli, mint, yoghurt, and leftover tomato soup
neillanthony.com

COVER NEILL ANTHONY



RESPECTING THE INGREDIENTS

Even though he lives a fast-paced and high-pressure lifestyle, Anthony still believes and invests in healthy, well-balanced meals for himself. It's the reason each episode of the show starts with him preparing a dish for himself at home.

Showing how easy it is to put together quick, healthy, affordable, and wholesome meals when you are on-the-go inspires viewers to do the same. More than that, because he's a private chef and not tied to a specific restaurant, it's an example of the freedom Anthony enjoys to cook what he wants, when he wants, and doing so with creative flair.

'No specific cuisine inspires me,' he says. 'Food cooked well and presented beautifully on a plate inspires my cooking. That's why my favourite dish to cook varies from day to day, month to month, and season to season. I'm a strong believer in sustainable food, so respecting the ingredients of the meal is of utmost importance to producing a special dish.'

ALL ABOUT THE FLAVOURS AND THE FOOD

Besides his work as a private chef, Anthony spends his time consulting for restaurants, doing both cooking demonstrations and motivational talks, and he also emcees for food events. Finding time for all this comes down to planning and organisation, which he admits is a lot easier with the help of a good PA.

Still, with time being his most precious resource, Anthony is meticulous about his future plans. This is why, although he'd like to produce more television shows and keep building his personal brand, he doesn't have any plans to open a restaurant at this stage. He also doesn't feel the need to constantly 'reinvent' himself as many chefs do.

'My philosophy is to keep things simple, local and seasonal,' he explains. 'More importantly, the food and dishes I create need to be on trend and executed well. At the end of the day, it's all about the flavours and the food.' **Man**



Visit the **Man Mag SA** YouTube channel to see how to make an epic gourmet burger with Neill Anthony.