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Introducing Group 3

GROUP 3 VICTORIA

EVE & JASON



Lovebirds Eve, 44, and Jason, 43, might've been together for 23 years, but they're just as in love as any newlyweds. In fact, in all their years together they've only spent two nights apart. Ever.

How did you meet?

Eve: I joined the gym to get fit and went to a circuit class and saw this long-haired lout in the corner working out with his friend. Jase had this super-duper long hair, and I was just like, 'Who is the dude with the hair? I've got to meet this dude.' I knocked on his door and he opened it and I was just smitten, it was just all over.

Jason: We've been apart since the day we met, two days in total.

Eve: We're best friends. I know some people grow apart but we're the opposite, we're finding more and more things in common.

Jason: It doesn't matter what shop you put us in, you could put us in separately, and we'll both come out with the same things, we're just that similar in our likes and what we want to do.

When did the passion for cooking start?

Eve: It hasn't always been there. We discovered food together. I think the Jamie Oliver sort of thing in the 90s was exciting and we met our best friends who we started having dinner parties with and just out of that, the four of us have sort of grown as cooks. A great night at home for us is, the music is cranking and there's a bottle of wine or whisky and we just cook and eat, even if it's just at the kitchen bench, and talk all night.

Jason: You know Eve just will make chapattis and we'll just stand over the kitchen sink eating and dancing, it won't even get to the table.

Who normally cooks at home?

Eve: We fight over it, it's the one thing we fight over - whose turn it is and we both want to cook.

Jason: Sometimes Eve will cook for three or four days and I'm like, 'Oi, out of the kitchen, it's my turn.'

What's an average dinner at home?

Eve: It's no surprise to anyone we know, we're curry mad. We make curry quite a lot. I love braises and I love spices. A curry on day four or five after you cook it is unbelievably good, that's kind of our standard. We don't really do the meat and three veg thing. We eat a lot of Asian food, and Jase will often grab a book, it might be Heston or Thomas Keller and be like, 'I've been reading this thing, let me cook it' so I get these kind of weird and wonderful meals thrown at me occasionally.

Jason: I like finding really old recipes, like some strange recipes that no-one cooks anymore.

Sweet or savoury?

Jason: Definitely savoury. We have been at a restaurant before and ordered the pork belly for dessert.

What's your biggest weakness in the competition?

Jason: I've got to make sure I peel back and don't go too fancy or too crazy. And possibly dessert.

Eve: I think I'm a control freak and I have to let go of that a little bit, let somebody else correct or taste or fix, I just want to fix everything, but I know there's no room for that in this competition, we have to work together.

You moved to the country and recently finished building your new home...

Eve: We are from Melbourne, but I've always wanted to move to the country. I've always been interested in self-sufficiency well before it was trendy, long before people started to talk about carbon footprint and these sorts of things.

Jason: It's more about being able to grow the best produce rather than being green.

Eve: It's not about living organically, we're not organic. I just love really fresh food and the best way to get fresh food is to grow it ourselves.



GROUP 3 NSW

CHRIS & COOKIE



Chris, 44, and Cookie, 44, almost couldn't have met any younger than they did – their fathers played rugby league together in Newcastle ensuring an in-built love of sport and a lifelong friendship from birth. Chris, now a sports physiotherapist, and dietician Cookie are both fathers to two looking for the next phase in their careers.

You've been friends for a long time...

Cookie: And we've been through every major moment in our lives from our marriages to our kids, everything. We're like family.

What are each other's most annoying habits?

Chris: Cookie likes to talk about himself. I'm trying to think, he's got so many annoying habits.

Cookie: What did Chris say? I just ignore him.

When did you discover your love of cooking?

Chris: We first cooked together for our Year 6 teacher. We went to her house and cooked a meal for her. I don't think any other kids did that.

Cookie: I actually cooked one of the first meals Chris and Dee had when they started going out.

Chris: I've always loved food; I was never the kid who would leave peas on their plate, I just always liked to eat. Therefore, because you like to eat, you like to cook because you want to eat.

Who taught you to cook?

Chris: Our mothers definitely [their mothers owned a sandwich shop together]. But our cooking is very different to their kind of stuff. We are a bit more creative. We are probably a bit self-taught.

Do you do the cooking at home? Are your wives into cooking too?

Cookie: My wife [Louise] will cook, she just doesn't like cooking so she's quite happy for me to do it all. I'm quite happy to not have a take-away and just cook but she sees cooking as a chore rather than something you love.

Chris: I'll get a phone call or text at work if Dee's going to cook and it will be like, 'What do I do with this?' I'll do the grocery shopping most weeks.

What about the kids, are they interested in cooking?

Chris: Oh big time. My son [Zac, 17] is doing hospitality for his HSC and as part of that he had work experience in a restaurant and then he got a job out of that as a waiter. And my daughter [Emma, 15] is a dish pig in another restaurant. They're both into it, they both like their food.

Cookie: Mine are younger [Gabriella, 7 and Oliver, 5] and they still have an interest in it, but they won't see a whole dish out. They'll help a little bit and then go onto something else.

What sort of food do you like to cook?

Chris: We describe ourselves as Modern Australian.

Cookie: That sums us up I think. We're pretty much generalist, we'll do most cuisines.

Chris: And if there's a certain protein, we love a pork belly and love a salmon.

Sweet or savoury?

Cookie: Both equal. We both really enjoy getting a nice dessert up or a nice entrée or main. We really like to do something a bit more creative and try to put a spin on things.

Anything you won't eat?

Cookie: We tried pig's intestine the other day and that was disgusting. But we'll have a go at most things. Chris will try more offal than me, I'm not big on it, I think there are so many good things to eat, why would you eat offal!

Chris: I'm not big on kale.

Cookie: We're just sort of set against it as it's supposed to be a super food; there's a lot of wankiness around that stuff.

Other hobbies?

Chris: I play golf regularly, surf, stand up paddle board, ride my bike, walk the dog, fishing.

Cookie: I run a bit and do some gym stuff and a lot of time with the kids. Having younger kids I can't join a golf club at this stage but we used to play a lot of golf together.

Do you dream of a future in the food industry?

Cookie: We're testing the waters a bit with this, I think we just want to find out whether it's really in us.

Chris: I've been a physio for 23 years and it's like anything you do, you do it for a really long time and it becomes a bit mundane. So we've talked about it at times but we're also realists and we know that it's an industry that's hard to make money out of and a lot of people fail at it.



GROUP 3 QUEENSLAND

HAZEL & LISA



Hazel and Lisa are not your typical mother-daughter team. Fitness trainer Hazel, at 48, is only 10 years older than her step daughter and they are more like best friends who love to shop and cook together. Expect a focus on clean eating when sitting at their dinner table.

How did your relationship start off?

Hazel: 23 years ago I met Lisa's dad, John. We were then married in 1996 and he passed away in 2005. He had a heart attack at 46.

Lisa: When I was 14 I lived with Dad and Haze.

Describe your relationship?

Hazel: We're a bit of step-daughter/step-mother/bestie/sisters, we're a bit of everything.

Lisa: I think because we've got such a small age gap as well, I don't have a good relationship with my sister, so I have Hazel. How quickly did you bond?

Hazel: From the first day, I was like, 'Do you want to cook something? Sure let's go cook some rissoles,' because that was all we could afford back then was mince.

Lisa: My mum was a pretty cook and she had me in the kitchen from a pretty young age. And then when I moved in with Dad and Haze, Haze had some tricks that mum hadn't taught me so I got to learn a lot more, it was good.

What sort of cooking do you do?

Lisa: We do anything. If we've eaten out and we like it, we try to replicate it when we go home. We go through the books to see what we haven't tried before and give that a go.

Hazel: We like trying lots of cuisines. We like a bit of Italian, the bum doesn't like it but we do. Lisa likes to cook a good curry, I like doing breads, we mix it up. Even though I'm older, she's taught me things as well and we kind of learn off each other. And I forget things really quickly so she'll remind me.

Do you focus on healthy food?

Hazel: When I'm at home, most definitely. But if it's a special occasion or we're sorting out a dinner party, that's not usually clean eating but we'll sort of try to use the best products possible. But usually when it's just me cooking for the family,

eight times out of 10 I'll cook something clean because you can make a lot of clean desserts too and everyone loves a dessert.

Lisa: You can make a lot of food that's clean and a lot of people don't even realise, it's not as hard you think.

Do your partners cook?

Lisa: Yeah, from a Patax jar.

Hazel: Mine does, he loves it. He cooks a lot of Lebanese Turkish stuff. He should be on this show, not me.

What do you love most about cooking?

Lisa: Eating good food; I hate going to a restaurant or a café and ordering something and you eat it and you're like, 'I could do a better job of this.' That annoys me.

Anything you don't eat?

Hazel: Tripe.

Lisa: Tinned beetroot.

What inspires you in the kitchen?

Hazel: I love cookbooks and I actually have a cookbook room called 'the good room'. I've got about 100 good quality, great smelling cookbooks and basically they are just there for ideas. We'll open them up and go, 'Oh yeah' and then go and do our own thing.

Lisa: I buy a lot of seasonal produce and buy a lot of it, so if zucchini are on sale one week I'll buy 2kg of zucchinis and it's just me and my husband and then for the rest of the week we'll be eating zucchinis, so I google zucchini to get ideas and that's what we'll be eating.

What are your best skills in the kitchen?

Lisa: Hazel has fantastic knife skills.

Hazel: And every time I think I'm really good, I cut myself. I think when I was in hospitality way back when I was like 16; someone probably taught me how to use a knife. Lisa's salsas and her chutneys, she's fantastic at those. She's actually quite famous for them in our area.



GROUP 3 QUEENSLAND

MIKE & TARQ



Only child Tarq has always had the undivided attention of his dad Mike in the kitchen and it certainly shows on the plate when they cook together. Tarq, 26, and Mike, 55, love nothing more than cooking for friends after a round of golf. Since the invitation often comes from the 19th hole, it's lucky they have a well-stocked pantry.

Tarq, tell us about your golfing career?

I played golf at the junior level, region, state and nationally and then I played it for the University of Arizona for four years at college. I played again for Australia as an amateur and turned professional in 2012. I played two years in Canada and a year in Australasia and then had a couple of injuries and surgeries over the last two years.

And Mike, you're a retired hotel manager?

I went to Hotel Management School and my whole career has been in hotels. I've worked in Fiji, Vanuatu and Australia. All the hotels I've worked at have been five-star hotels so they've always had decent restaurants and earlier on in my career when you had to be there as the senior person on duty, I'd just go stand in the kitchen.

Tarq: Dad also had a hand in menu design and menu tasting which was good for me.

Mike: I'd be one of the harshest critics for the chef, but more often than not things would be tweaked afterwards. Have you always been into food?

Mike: Yeah ever since I was a kid. My nickname in Fiji growing up was "big stomach" which I've had since I was like eight-years-old.

Who taught you how to cook?

Mike: My mum was a really good cook, but our house girls were with us for all of our growing up, they were really good cooks and all of us helped out in the kitchen from an early age. And then just going around to friend's places, I would look in from the corridors as their mums would cook, and just learnt from that.

Tarq: I think I grew as a cook when I actually left home. You can only be taught stuff for so long but eventually you need to get out there and do it yourself and discover your own tastes.

What ingredients do you use a lot of?

Mike: Ginger, galangal, kaffir lime leaves, lots of curry leaves.

Tarq: Lots of aromats basically.

How would you describe your cooking?

Tarq: Fairly generous to start. We love our chilli too, that's a really big part of our food, bringing a lot of very flavourful elements. We like multiple layered kind of food; bringing different things to the party that you may not always expect. Probably our best asset is our versatility, bringing different flavours and cuisines together, our fusion of cuisines and ingredients.

What are each other's most annoying habits?

Tarq: Dad makes pun jokes constantly, it's painful. When you finally think there's no more jokes, it's not over yet.

Mike: Tarq sleeps half his life, in the mornings anyway. Why do you think you have what it takes to win?

Mike: We have a competitive instinct and a feel for food. We're not daunted or intimidated by anything, so we'll give any cuisine a whirl.

Tarq: And Dad's like a walking talking food encyclopaedia and I think I bring a bit of modern flair to it. And while we have our versatility, our ability to sort of work on the fly and improvise, I think improvisation is the best thing in cooking and not being afraid of ingredients.

Mike: And having all your spices in the cupboard. You know I've probably got as many spices as a spice shop would have, all in individual jars in alphabetical order.

Tarq: I always get into trouble for that, I go and mix them up on purpose!

How does cooking make you feel?

Mike: Confident for one, like you're in your element, your go-to zone, the happy place.



GROUP 3 NSW

TIM & DEE



Tim, 30, and Dee, 28, celebrated their one-year wedding anniversary by signing up for MKR! Always after an adventure, these sweethearts love to travel, cook and gather new knowledge along the way to add to their multi-cultural union.

How did you meet?

Dee: We were both working in a supermarket nine years ago. I was in high school. Tim was having a gap year after school. I was a checkout chick and he was a grocery boy.

What makes your relationship work?

Tim: Having different opinions, respect and respecting each other's opinions.

Dee: Communication. We talk.

Is there a boss?

Tim: Dee is the boss.

Dee: Only on paper.

Does your partner have any annoying habits?

Dee: Tim's a bad singer.

Tim: Yes I am, but I love it.

Dee: Maybe I chew with my mouth open? We've been together for too long - we're immune to them now.

What do you love most about each other?

Dee: Tim makes me laugh.

Tim: And Dee keeps me on the straight and narrow.

Dee: Tim tends to need a little prodding.

Tim: I tend to indulge a little bit and Dee's definitely good at pulling me back in.

How did your love of food evolve?

Dee: We've always loved to eat food. Food is just a bit part of my family; we were always in the kitchen cooking, eating, hanging out so I guess Tim just spent a lot of time in our kitchen and now we live together we do the same in our kitchen.

Tim: Through our families, our culture (Tim is Chinese Australian; Dee is Spanish). But mum did most of the cooking so that is where I learnt the basic cooking techniques, but I didn't really pay attention, I didn't pay attention to the names either but I just kind of knew it without really knowing it. And then when I started dating Dee I got a bit of a passion for it. The BBQ is my thing.

What cuisines do you focus on?

Dee: We do like Chinese, I mean I lived in China for a short time as well and I really love to cook Chinese food. And obviously Spanish food is my background. But generally, I like to experiment in the kitchen. We always like to try new things. We don't like to cook the same thing all the time.

Tim: We like to see what happens. We'll often make last-minute changes and see how it goes.

How much cooking do you do together?

Dee: We probably take it in turns during the week and on the weekend we cook together.

Tim: Sometimes I'll turn the BBQ on and Dee will take care of the salad or veggie preparation because she loves that. I normally get Dee to supervise me on pretty much everything.

Do you use recipes?

Dee: We don't like to follow a recipe but it's always great to read different recipes and get inspiration and ideas but I find it pretty hard to follow them. But we love to cook with what we have on hand. No food waste basically as we use what we have.

How does cooking make you feel?

Dee: I love cooking. I think it relaxes me and for me it's a creative outlet. I love different ways of creating things and it's a great way to incorporate that into everyday life.

Tim: I love cooking because it is quality time spent with my wife and I love to eat and I love tasting throughout.

Do you have a head chef?

Tim: Dee is our head chef.

Dee: Well I am, but Tim never listens.

Are your strengths in sweet or savoury?

Dee: I'm not really big on sweets. I mean I like to eat them, but I'm not much of a baker. Maybe it's because I don't like to follow a recipe. And knowing how much sugar is in there kills the vibe!



GROUP 3 SOUTH AUSTRALIA

CARMINE & LAUREN



Before Lauren, 31, decides to become a mum and practice her pureeing techniques, she's having a shot at the MKR title! While green smoothies and clean eating are normally on the menu at home, this nutrition student and her concreter husband Carmine, 33, are bringing the full flavours of their Italian heritage along for the MKR ride.

What do you love most about each other?

Carmine: I love Lauren's passion for what she wants to achieve. She never lets go of her dreams and goals and always does her best to achieve what she wants in life. She's a very hard worker.

Lauren: Carmine is the same - he's very hard working, very caring, very loving. He's very hard working but at the same time he can be very carefree and be able to wind down and I wish I could do that. I'm not a stress head but when I want to do something I'm going to do it now.

What are your other hobbies besides cooking?

Carmine: My main thing is sport. I'm a very big sport person. I love AFL - the Adelaide Crows are my team. And motor sports.

Lauren: I'm very much into nutrition and I was studying that before I got onto MKR. I'm very much into health and fitness.

Carmine: We like keeping fit, taking the dog for walks. Charlie, our two-year-old Beagle, is a disaster. He digs up everything; anything you put into the backyard he'll destroy. But we love him. He's our practice baby.

Does your partner have any annoying habits?

Lauren: Carmine is always touching my stuff.

Carmine: I'm a bit more neat and Lauren is a bit more no-so-neat.

Lauren: I have stuff everywhere and I know if Carmine's been touching it for example, in our bedroom I'll have one shoe at one end of the room and the other one on the other end and I know Carmine's been in there if he puts both my shoes together.

Carmine: But that's not an annoying habit; I don't care that she's messy.

Why is Lauren the boss in the kitchen?

Carmine: Lauren is definitely more of a cook than me. I started cooking before the show a little bit but Lauren entered us into this. And she has taught me a lot of stuff. Don't get me wrong, I got a few things from my mum and nona. But Lauren has really pushed me along in the kitchen.

Lauren: Yes, I'm the boss of the kitchen! I remember when I was little my mum was always the cake maker for anyone's birthday. She'd always make sponge cakes for everyone and always have cream piped around and everything looked pretty. Maybe that's why I like doing desserts now. When I was little I used to love school holidays so I could watch all the cooking shows like Huey's Cooking Adventures, Ready Steady Cook. I am the type of person if I watch someone do something I can do it.

Are you adventurous eaters?

Carmine: I will try anything but quite often when I go out I eat things that I know I've liked before. But I'm open to trying new things.

Lauren: I'm pretty adventurous. I just say to the waiter, 'Give me whatever you think, give me whatever you would eat, give me the best thing.' Because we're all creatures of habit. You're always drawn to the same things you always order which is why I need to get someone else to choose for me.

How much does your Italian heritage influence your cooking?

Carmine: It's pretty prominent.

Lauren: We actually love eating Vietnamese, Thai and we love different cuisines but I think our strength is definitely Italian food because that is what we've grown up with around our dinner tables.

Carmine: The whole Italian thing is family and food. There's always a big Italian feast. It's always been that way so it tends to filter into your cooking.

Lauren: We got a lot of inspiration from our recent travels to Italy as well. I think it just opened another can of worms and we did get some ideas from what we ate in Italy.

What's your secret weapon in this competition?

Carmine: Lauren, she's my secret weapon. And through our background and style of cooking, we can showcase a lot of good things. Lauren with her desserts will get us over the line.

Lauren: I think it's just staying focused. If there is any weapon it's staying focused mentally, focus on the end goal and work towards that.

Carmine: And we work together like champions.

