

ZUMBO'S JUST DESSERTS



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Australia's most celebrated patissier Adriano Zumbo will put the country's most passionate dessert makers to the test on ZUMBO'S JUST DESSERTS.

Joining him on this tantalising trip will be acclaimed British chef Rachel Khoo. Under their watchful eye, 12 contestants will put their sweet making skills to the test until the ultimate dessert king or queen is crowned.

Their journey begins at the candy-coloured Dessert Factory, where they must make some magic.

In every episode, Zumbo will set a Sweet Sensations Task. Cooking to Zumbo's special brief and theme, they'll have to create a dessert using their imagination.

Top pastry chef Gigi Falanga is Zumbo's assistant on the factory floor, helping the dessert makers keep to time after they power up their dessert stations. There'll be plenty of thrills and spills as they battle the factory clock and their nerves to finish on time.

Judges Zumbo and Khoo will taste and critique all their creations. The two dessert makers with the weakest creations must then compete in the Zumbo Test.

Known as the Patissier of Pain, Zumbo will unveil a fantastical and challenging never before seen creation from underneath the Dessert Dome, which the bottom two contestants must replicate.

Zumbo and Khoo will score the dishes out of 10. The lowest scoring contestant will be eliminated. It's a baptism of fire with someone sent home every episode.

The winner of the competition will not only take home \$100,000 in prize money but they'll also have one of their creations in Zumbo's stores.

They'll bake. They'll create. But only one will rise. Who will be Australia's best?

ZUMBO'S JUST DESSERTS is an original Seven concept from the makers of My Kitchen Rules.





ALI

Age: 28 | Occupation: Insurance Broker

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Ali has been crowned the Dessert Queen by all her friends and family.

Heavily inspired by French cooking, she continually dazzles them with delectable delicacies.

"I really love French style desserts, like layered cakes with mousses, sponges and tarts," she says. "I have to go to the gym every night just to balance out my love of desserts!"

While her grandmother Dorothy taught her the baking basics, her passion for desserts was ignited after a trip to Paris when she was 18. "I saw all these beautiful cakes and pastries. I was like, 'I want to know how to do that!'"

She's since completed several courses at the famed Savour Chocolate & Pâtisserie School in Melbourne.

Largely self-taught, she now produces the calibre of desserts that would make her idol, French master patissier Christophe Michalak, proud.

Born and raised in Canberra, Ali runs a small cake business in her spare time called La Petite Miette, which means The Little Crumb in French.

Her dream is to study in Paris and hone her craft. "I love being able to come up with an idea in my head and make it something edible," she says.

Ali may appear sweet on the outside but there's a fire burning inside. "When it comes to desserts I get competitive. There's two Ali's in the kitchen; one is cool, calm and collected, the other can get frustrated, which can lead to tears."

Plating up could be her secret weapon in the competition. "My attention to detail is my strength," she says. "But being a perfectionist is a bit annoying because you spend too much time on things that don't matter."

When Ali's not in the kitchen, you can find her tearing through the streets on her motorbike.

"People's first impression of me is that I'm quite prim and proper, but that's not the case at all. My other passion is motorcycle riding. I love the adrenalin kick that it gives me."



AMIE

Age: 24 | Occupation: Admin Assistant

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When Amie isn't answering phones at her parents' landscaping business, she's busy creating magic in the kitchen.

"Working part-time from home gives me the freedom to do what I really love, which is cake decorating," she says. "I make a few cakes a week and sell them through word of mouth, and Instagram."

Amie's Whipped Cake Co. company has nearly 100,000 Instagram followers and is run from her Brisbane home.

Her passion for sweets was sparked when her mother gave her a cake decorating book after she finished high school.

"I thought it was really interesting," she says. "I started decorating with fondant doing cupcakes and small cakes for friends, baby showers and all of my friends' 21st cakes and it just grew from there."

For Amie, making cakes is a way of expressing herself. "I get to create yummy things to eat and it's the best feeling when you give someone a cake and their eyes light up and they just love it."

Attention to detail is key. "I'm definitely a perfectionist when it comes to desserts, everything has to be neat, and if it's not, it gets re-done again."

While cakes are her forté, it could be her undoing. "I'm more into traditional desserts, rather than the modern patissier-style desserts Zumbo does. It's not my style."

Friends and family know her for her scrumptious jam doughnuts and sticky date puddings.

She loves using citrus in her dessert making but surprisingly can't stand chocolate. "I love traditional flavours. I'm not good at pairing weird flavours and making them work."

Amie hopes to make a career out of her hobby. "I'm scared to stop work and do this full-time. It's a big plunge. I have to pay the rent somehow. But it's my end goal and I want to be my own boss someday."

ASHLEY

Age: 28 | Occupation: Jetstar Crewing Officer

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Ashley's eyes widen with delight whenever he talks about lollies and desserts.

"I'm obsessed with sweets," he says. "Things like sherbet bombs, marshmallows, milk bottles, licorice, bananas...I am like a kid in a candy store."

His friends and family have even nicknamed him Charlie Bucket, the much-loved character from Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.

"The things that I make are instantly relatable to that movie," he says.

"I want my desserts to be able to transport people into a world of imagination, whether it's colour combination, flavour combinations and textures. The more over the top it is the better!"

His love of cooking stems from his European heritage - his mother is Croatian.

"Every Christmas and Easter, we'd have the traditional food brought out and I used to get taken to a lot

of bakeries when I was younger. It's just developed from there."

His job with Jetstar takes him all over the world, exposing him to some of the best desserts available.

"Being able to travel the world has been hugely inspiring," he says. "It's opened me up to new ideas."

Work for Ashley can be demanding, which should help him cope in the Dessert Factory. "The stress levels can get very high. It's like a pressure cooker."

A dirty work station will be a tell-tale sign he's in trouble. "The mess starts to build around me. If I have a full bench, it's a good indicator that I'm feeling the heat in the kitchen."

Ashley loves working with citrus and thinks his flavour combinations are his strength. "I would say I'm competitive," he says. "I reckon I could go very far in this competition."

Ashley dreams of one day opening a high-end confectionary store in his hometown of Melbourne. "I love to make people laugh and smile."





BROGEN

Age: 22 | Occupation: Stay-at-home Mum

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For stay-at-home mum Brogen, the kitchen is her sanctuary; a magical wonderland where her imagination runs wild.

"I got married really young at 18 and had my daughter Sway a year later," she says. "It's been hectic ever since. I feel like desserts are my escape. It's my time to shut everything out and focus on what I'm creating."

Sway, who turns three in August, has inherited her mum's love for desserts. "We bake all the time," Brogen says. "She loves banana bread and cupcakes."

The Gold Coast local keeps it simple for her daughter but complicated tiered cakes adorned with hand-crafted sugar is her specialty. "My style of dessert is over the top. Presentation is everything."

Brogen has taught herself everything she knows. "I started learning from watching chefs on TV. Then I started buying cook books. My shelf is filled with hundreds of them. I worked my way through all of them."

She's already printed off her own cook book, compiled of family favourites, which she hopes will be published one day.

Her other dream is to open a fairytale like dessert shop. "When you walk inside, it'll be an interactive and magical experience; an explosion of flavours that just dance on your tongue. It won't just be a dessert on a countertop."

Creamy caramel is her favourite ingredient to use. "I'm a caramel girl through and through. I like to weave it through everything."

As the youngest contestant in the competition, she's counting on her youth to propel her to victory. "Being young is a benefit because you have that energy inside you."

Fiercely competitive, she's got her eye on the prize. "I feel like I'm going to win this because I am so determined to put everything that I am into this. I'm going to bring it!"



DANIEL

Age: 25 | Occupation: Bouncer

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Daniel is the last person you'd expect to be a whiz in the kitchen. The Bendigo bouncer cuts an intimidating figure with his bulging biceps but there's more to him than meets the eye.

"People have this perception of what I'm meant to be; a dumb muscle head," he says. "When you break that mould, it's a bit of a surprise for them."

The patrons at the nightclub he mans would have no idea he produces mind boggling desserts that would rival Heston Blumenthal.

"I would describe my dessert style as complex," he says. "I enjoy working with elements of molecular gastronomy, using science to perfect my creations."

"I'm all about multiple layers, elements and flavours. I can't stand boring desserts, so the stuff you see at a local café, I got no time for."

Daniel's skills far exceed his experience. He only taught himself how to make desserts two years ago from Youtube, inspired by a Zumbo high tea he enjoyed in Bali.

"There was a crème brulee in an egg shell, an edible playing card and tomato shaped macarons," he says. "It challenged my senses and opened my eyes to what is possible."

If Daniel wins the competition, he dreams of opening a sensory experience pâtisserie.

He feels he has enough tricks up his sleeve to snare victory. "My biggest strength is my skills repertoire," he says. "I know a lot of pâtisserie style skills - glazing, cremeux, mousses - but that brings me to my weakness. I have trouble sometimes bringing it altogether."

When he's not busy playing crazy culinary scientist, you'll find him in the gym.

"Keeping in shape is handy in my line of work," he says. "I'm into fitness because knowing that I can get better each week, that's something I strive for."



IRENE

Age: 34 | Occupation: Financial Analyst

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Irene may spend her days crunching numbers but she's secretly daydreaming of spun sugar and melting chocolate.

"When I'm in the kitchen, that's where I really come alive," she says. "Desserts make me really happy. Every time I go to a café and see a gleaming cabinet of pastries, I get giddy!"

Food is in her blood but her chef father discouraged her from following in his footsteps. Originally from China, he worked around the clock to provide for his family

"He's always had to work really hard and he wants a better life for me, so he's always encouraged me to study hard, get an office job, but it's not where my passion lies.

"I would love my dad to see this is where my heart lies and that I can actually make a living out of creating desserts."

Irene would love to open her own café but it's a gamble she can't afford at the moment.

"That would be a dream come true but I can't quit my job because it's stable and pays the mortgage."

The Melbournian picked up a few things from her dad but it was the Internet, books and eating out that really took her dessert making to a new level.

"When I watch TV shows or if I go out, I'll go home and try and replicate it," she says. "I love creating really dainty desserts which are girly and feminine, like mousses and tarts."

Presentation is her strength. "I have a strong eye for detail and bake with instinct as well."

But her confidence could see her crumble under pressure. "I'm quite a perfectionist," she says. "I'm very hard on myself."



KATE

Age: 37 | Occupation: Claims Processor

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Kate's desserts may be sugar coated but her opinions are not.

"I can be really blunt and I offend people quite easily," she admits. "Going into this competition there's no middle ground, it's win or lose. I'm going to go down in a blaze of glory if I'm going down."

Kate lives on a 10-acre property in Ballarat, Victoria, with her long-time partner Matt and their two children, eight-year-old daughter Charlie, and son Sam, six.

She learned how to cook from her mother and grandmother. "We would bake sponge cakes, scones, apple turnovers, all sorts of things."

Her repertoire has evolved over the years to now include sophisticated desserts like her signature apple mille-feuille, a family

favourite consisting of layers of razor thin homemade pastry and cream filling.

"I like to make interesting desserts and put a weird twist on them," she says. "I like to take someone else's recipe and bastardise the hell out of it so it's not really what it was."

She admits her style isn't "fancy" or "modern" but what she lacks in technique she makes up with passion. "I'm tenacious and competitive," she says. "You'll have to drag me out of the competition kicking and screaming."

Kate processes claims for a government agency and is tired of being chained to a desk.

Winning is her golden ticket to a brand new life. "My ultimate goal is to have a dessert food truck, making country classics and taking them to the next level."



MICHAEL

Age: 51 | Occupation: Bricklayer

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After 30 odd years in the construction industry, Michael is ready to hang up his hard hat.

"I'm knackered, I've had enough of it," he says. "I don't want to go back to that."

As a teenager, he began a pastry chef apprenticeship. "I loved every minute of it," he says. "My French boss could do anything. He could make toffee stand up; it was inspiring."

The Noosa bricklayer dreams of a sweeter life and often ponders what might have been had he continued in the industry.

"The business went bust and so did my apprenticeship, so I just went straight back to laying bricks again.

"I should have been a pastry chef. I should have followed that dream, because if you do what you love, you'll never work a day in your life."

Michael dreams of one day opening up a dessert-only café. "I've always wanted to

call it All About The Sugar," he says. "I wake up and eat dessert. Pastries and chocolate is all I eat."

Michael's wife Robyn shares his love for cooking and surfing.

He wowed her and their 80 wedding guests with a homemade croquembouche; a towering mountain of choux pastry puffs filled with crème pâtisserie dipped in dark, white and milk chocolate.

The straight talker says he's an "old dog with new tricks" who can show the young guns a thing or two.

"These young ones are up to date with the science of food but I bring the flavour and taste."

Michael has two adult children from his first marriage and became a grandfather for the first time this year.

"It's time to down the tools and follow my dream," he says. "I'm coming for everyone. Bring it on. Mickey the Bricky's coming to town!"



PATRICIA

Age: 33 | Occupation: Social Media Manager

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Macaron queen Patricia is as colourful and full of life as the chewy sugary puffs she bakes by the dozen.

“My friends call me Little Miss Sunshine,” she beams. “I’m enthusiastic about everything, especially desserts. Life is amazing, embrace it!”

But things haven’t always been sweet and rosy for the Sydney-sider. “When I was a baby I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. In my 20’s my condition started to get worse and I started to go blind and my kidneys began to fail.”

A kidney and pancreas transplant in 2011 not only saved her life, it opened the door to a world of confectionary she’d never been able to enjoy before.

“Now I can eat pretty much whatever I want. What I’ve been through, it’s made me

dig deep and find some inner strength, and I’ve got a real ‘never say die’ attitude.

“That’s why I’m here in this competition. I feel like I’m paying tribute to my donor by living life to the fullest, because it would be a waste if I didn’t.”

Dessert has been a form of culinary therapy. “I couldn’t tell you how much I love making desserts! Post-transplant I wasn’t allowed to work for a while. So I picked up a recipe book for macarons and the first batch I made were perfect.

“I discovered it’s quite an art to making them. And that was it. I was hooked.”

Her biggest fan is her husband of seven years, Russell, who’s been by her side throughout it all.

“We’ve been through a lot, more than what most couples go through in a lifetime. Now we try to live life the best we can.”



PETER

Age: 57 | Occupation: Car Salesman

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Melbourne wheeler and dealer, Peter, sells cars for a living but he'd rather be in a café serving slices of his legendary tiramisu.

"I've been doing it for 20 years, too long for me," he sighs. "I don't think about cars at all, I just think about desserts."

He's had several jobs in his lifetime, including a successful career as a wholesaler of men's garments.

Blessed with an ability to sell and the gift of the gab, he dreams of retailing his desserts to coffee shops and restaurants.

"I'm 100 per cent certain food is my future," he says. "If you're passionate about something and that's what you're dreaming of, that's what you have to pursue."

Married to wife Maria for 36 years, Peter is a devoted family man with two adult children, one of whom shares his love for food. His son Dean, 34, runs a successful roaming food cart selling Greek doughnuts.

"He went to Greece for a holiday and saw that everyone was going crazy and lining up for loukoumades," he says. "He came back and said, 'Dad, can you show me how to make them'."

Likewise, Peter learned a lot about food from his Greek grandmother and a cookbook he bought at the age of 15. "I set about making everything in that book," he says. "The first thing I made was a crème anglaise. I thought, wow that's unbelievable. Look at that custard."

As the oldest contestant in the competition, Peter is banking on his experience to set him apart.

"I understand flavours and how things should be done," he says. "Most of the desserts I do, I do them very well."

"I would have loved 20, 30 years ago to have been doing this, because I honestly think that I would have taken the world by storm."

VICKI

Age: 44 | Occupation: Technical Writer

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Vicki says she feels like a kid in a candy shop whenever she's in the kitchen.

“Whatever else is going on in my life, I feel that is the place where I’m happy,” she says. “Cooking is really meditative. It’s the channel for creativity.”

The Sydney-sider has an eye for aesthetics. She ran her own business as a wallpaper designer before moving into technical writing.

“As part of my job, I have to be very methodical,” she says. “I do find that translates in the kitchen. I’m happiest when I’ve got a recipe with lots of components that I can follow and tick off.”

Self-taught, Vicki plates up the sort of elegant desserts you’d find at any of the fine dining restaurants she frequents on a regular basis.

“I would describe my style of desserts as very simple and minimal,” she says. “I enjoy starting

off with an idea in my head, mapping it out and seeing it all come together in the end.”

Balancing flavours is her secret weapon. “I like to come up with different flavour pairings and think outside the box,” she says.

Her friends and family, and even the cleaner and concierge, are the lucky recipients of her culinary creations. “I’d love to be married and have a couple of kids,” she adds. “That would mean everything to me to share my desserts with someone I love.”

Vicki has taken a break from her job to try her luck on Zumbo’s Just Desserts and she’s hoping it’s the beginning of a new chapter in her life.

“Winning this competition would mean I can take the next steps into the kind of life that I really want to lead, whether it’s owning my own dessert bar, or working in a kitchen with someone amazing,” she says. “I want to be doing what I love and doing it every day.”



WENDY

Age: 39 | Occupation: Recruitment Consultant

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Wendy's love of desserts stems from her childhood. She remembers sitting in the playground, envious of her classmates' lunchbox treats.

"I'd see all the kids come to school with lamingtons, homemade cookies, chocolate crackles, Anzac biscuits and toffees," she says. "I thought, how can I get my hands on all this food?"

It was a whole new world for Wendy, whose parents had migrated from Hong Kong just before she was born. "My parents aren't bakers. So I was like, I better learn how to make them myself."

From the age of six, she started teaching herself how to bake. "Most kids would borrow storybooks from the library but I'd run over to the cooking section," she says.

"That's how it all began. I started off initially with cake packet mixes and slowly began crafting things from scratch."

While her parents had hoped she'd get into commerce, Wendy has always enjoyed breaking the mould.

"I've always loved living a life that isn't conventional because, let's face it, conventional is boring."

Wendy works in recruitment in her hometown of Melbourne but is hoping to start up a cooking class business for various groups, like singles looking for love.

For Wendy, dessert making is an artistic release. "Baking is like art," she says. "I love all things creative, especially the arts. The quirrier the better because I'm a little bit quirky."

"Even though my personality is quite out there, my style of dessert is conventional and classic."

She loves using her hands to make magic in the kitchen.

"I am a tactile person," she says. "I find it very hard to cook or create if I haven't actually felt the ingredients with my hands."

"I get enthusiastic when it comes to making desserts, a bit too enthusiastic sometimes, so I guess you could say it's an obsession."

ADRIANO ZUMBO

Host & Judge |  @ZumboPatisserie |  @ZumboPatisserie

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Adriano Zumbo is one of Australia's most celebrated patissiers.

From his melt-in-the-mouth Zumbarons to his show-stopping croquembouche, his sweet creations are legendary.

The Prince of Pastries says he's looking forward to unearthing the country's best dessert makers.

"Who doesn't love desserts? It's everyone's favourite course and this show will be a trip into my wonderful world of pastry," he says. "I can't wait to share my latest sweet creations - they're out of this world!"

Adriano's first taste of the sweet life was raiding the lollies and cake mix from his parent's Coonamble supermarket in country NSW.

He began his apprenticeship at the age of 15 where his love affair with pastry flourished.

His swiftly expanding empire began in 2007 with his Balmain shop front, where sugared-up locals couldn't get enough of his pastries.

An appearance on the first series of MasterChef Australia helped introduce the croquembouche to an even wider audience and made Adriano - and macarons - a household name.

Adriano has opened seven stores throughout NSW and Victoria, including a concept store at The Star Casino.

In 2011 he released his first book, Zumbo, allowing anyone with a sense of adventure to try their hand at his desserts.

A second book followed in 2012. Entitled Zumbarons, it celebrates his most popular creations, macarons, with 40 flavours to delight and inspire.

Adriano has competed in several prominent international competitions, including Coupe de Monde and the Asian Pastry Cup.

In 2012 he joined forces with premium chocolate brand Cacao Barry, becoming their Australian Ambassador.

It's his love affair with confectionery, combined with his Parisian training at institutions that include l'Ecole Lenôte, Bellouet, Pierre Hermé and Damiani, which has resulted in a sensibility as delicious as it is irreverent.

This creativity is evident in every layer of his elaborate desserts. Constantly evolving and always considering his next move, cake, or idea, Adriano's infectious energy keeps his fans on their toes.



RACHEL KHOO

Host & Judge |  @rkhooks |  @rachelkhooks

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Acclaimed British Chef Rachel Khoo was last seen on Channel Seven as the surprise judge on My Kitchen Rules. On Zumbo's Just Desserts, she'll be at the helm with Zumbo as they go in search of Australia's best dessert makers.

It's the perfect role for the Paris-trained pastry chef.

"Desserts are in my blood," she says. "From my fond childhood memories of licking cake batter off spoons, making gingerbread with my mum, or sitting at my Austrian grandma's table and watching her stretch out strudel dough, to my perfecting a buttery pain au chocolat in Paris, I feel at home when I'm whisking, folding, whipping or piping."

Rachel graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Art & Design from the renowned Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London.

Ultimately, her passion for pâtisserie lured her to Paris, where she studied at Le Cordon Bleu and obtained a pastry degree.

"The skill and craftsmanship are what initially drew me to study pâtisserie in Paris; unlike other sorts of cooking, there is a certain scientific precision to desserts," she says. "Too much butter and the batter spreads; too hot and the cakes cracks."

Rachel put her skills to excellent use at the Paris culinary bookstore and tea salon, La Cocotte. There

Rachel concocted delicious sweet treats, regularly providing catering for book launches and hosting cookery classes on site.

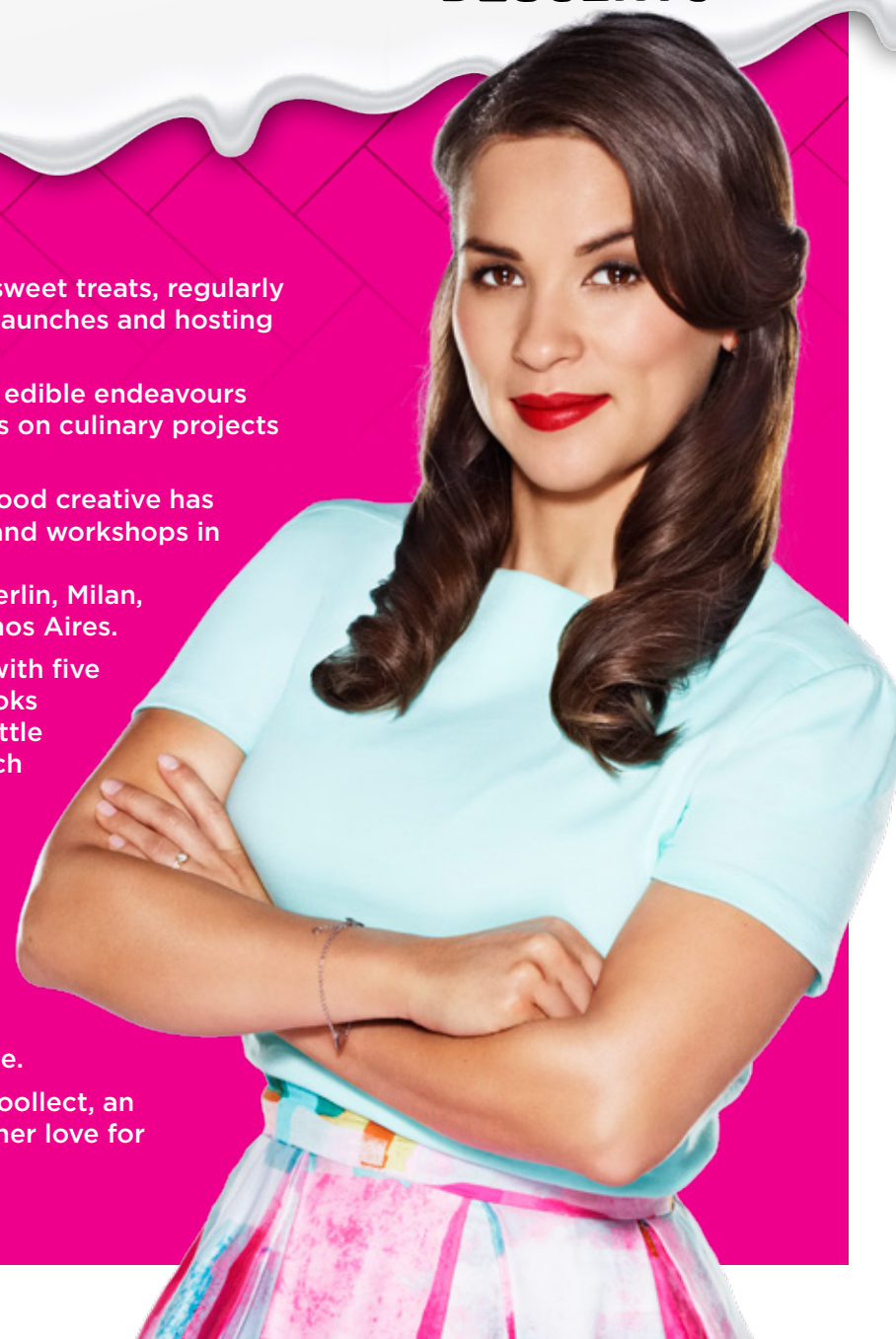
Following the success of her edible endeavours at La Cocotte, she now works on culinary projects throughout the world.

Her role as an international food creative has spanned six-course dinners and workshops in places as far-flung as London, Paris, Berlin, Milan, Melbourne, Sydney and Buenos Aires.

Rachel is also a food writer with five best-selling international books to her name including The Little Paris Kitchen, My Little French Kitchen and Rachel Khoo's Kitchen Notebook.

She has also filmed five cooking and travel TV programs in the past four years, including The Little Paris Kitchen, A Cook Abroad and Rachel Khoo's Kitchen Notebook: Melbourne.

Rachel recently launched Khoollect, an online platform focusing on her love for food, travel and fashion.



GIGI FALANGA

Assistant |  @byGiovana_ |  @by.gigi

ZUMBO'S JUST
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Gigi Falanga is one of the most exciting emerging talents in the dynamic world of Australian desserts.

On Zumbo's Just Desserts, Gigi is Zumbo's assistant on the Dessert Factory floor. She'll act as timekeeper and report back to Zumbo and Rachel.

"I'll be keeping a close eye on everything the contestants are doing," she says. "I'll be asking them lots of questions; is that the right consistency? Do the flavours work well together?"

Originally from Brazil where she studied tourism at university, Gigi moved to Australia in 2004.

It was here that her interest in desserts began. She completed her education with an Advanced Diploma in Hospitality including Commercial Cookery III.

Born into a family of architects, sketching and creating came easily to her. "To be a good pastry chef, you have to be really precise and very organised. It's everything I am."

She has ascended the ranks of Sydney's best fine dining restaurants.

Her combination of elegance, finesse, skill and creativity has been moulded by some of Australia's best pastry masterminds.

She's worked alongside the punk princess of pastry, Anna Polyviou, at the Shangri-la Hotel, for the last three years.

Prior to that, Anna had hired her as her chef de partie at The Bather's Pavilion in July 2012, before promoting her to sous chef.

Her skills were also honed at Manta, where she worked for four months under the guidance of John Ralley.

From 2010 to 2011, she was at Jonah's at Whale Beach under the tutelage of internationally acclaimed chef, Alfonse Ales.

Prior to that, she worked at The Healthy Chef Café with Teresa Cutter, one of Australia's leading authorities on healthy cooking.

Gigi also has her own cake making business called ByGigi, where she's been able to showcase skills acquired at Sydney's Faye Cahill Cake Design School and the Savour Pâtisserie School in Melbourne.

In 2014, she finished first in a dessert plating competition at the Smooth FM Chocolate Festival, which included a prize to the US to study wedding cake decoration at the prestigious Cacao Barry Chocolate Academy. This year, Gigi will return to the festival as a demonstrator.



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