

# Being with Fern is like having a mistress!



Phil keeps a firm grip on what matters in his life

Phil Vickery, 46, is a man wise enough to know he's got everything he could ever want...

**T**elly chef Phil Vickery is the 'lucky sod' married to national treasure Fern Britton. They have four children, twins Jack and Harry, 13, and Grace, 10 – from Fern's first marriage – and their daughter, Winnie, six. Here, Phil reveals why life with Fern is so fantastic, the secret behind his good looks, and the inspiration for his new cookbook...

**What's it like living with a national institution?**

When Fern's on TV, she's a completely different woman – she wears make-up, different clothes and her hair's done. At home, she's a normal mum, the make-up's off and she wears comfy clothes. I feel as if I have two women in my life! It's like having a mistress – not that I've ever had one, but I imagine this is what it's like. It's exciting. Fern's very sexy. She's

gorgeous, and I love her to bits. People write to me and say, 'You lucky sod,' and I say, 'Yes, I am.'

**You and Fern both look great. Fern's lost three stone, and you look particularly hunky, despite being a pudding chef. What's your secret?**

I really toned up when I did a nude photo shoot for a magazine. I did a six-week workout for that. But I play a lot of football, walk our black Labrador, Denver, every day and take the kids swimming. I'm known as a pudding chef, but I don't eat puddings. It's like working in a sweet shop – you soon get tired of the sweets. Fern started cycling two years ago, when she rode round India and Egypt for charity. And we both made a decision not to eat as much. We eat at regular times with the children not late at night, and we've cut down on chocolate and sweets. We always ate a balanced diet, but now we just have smaller portions.

**Is it easy to get your kids to eat healthy food?**

Winnie will eat oysters – she calls them sea juice – but I don't ban them from having anything as they'll end up craving those foods. We have takeaways – Indian, Chinese, Thai, even KFC. The kids have fizzy drinks, sweets and cakes, but in moderation. The key is to

have a balanced diet. Never offer children a choice. Just say, 'This is supper,' and give them the food. There are things like spinach that you can never get kids to eat, so you should hide it in things they do like, such as mashed potato.

**Fern went to Hell's Kitchen and drooled over chef Marco Pierre White. She said she wanted to clasp him to her bosom...**

Did she say that? I didn't know that! Fern likes all chefs. Marco's quite unkempt and scruffy. I said to her, 'Should I be like



'Fern's very sexy. She's gorgeous, and I love her to bits'

## THE Woman's Own INTERVIEW

that?' but she said, 'Oh no, I like you as you are.'

**What did you think of Marco's food and attitude?**

Fantastic. Lovely, simple food. He came over as a bit of a hard man – but fair. He was actually quite charming and dismissed the theory that all chefs are bullies.

**You were head chef at a Michelin-starred restaurant. Were you a shouter?**

I shouted – but I was never violent. What I hated in staff was a couldn't-care-less attitude. I'd never shout at someone because they didn't know how to do something or had an accident. The food had to be right, though.

**Do you miss working in a kitchen?**

All kitchens are like



Fern on ITV's *Hell's Kitchen*, and her lust object, Marco Pierre White, inset

Gordon Ramsay's and Marco's. They're very intense and very scary, but immensely exciting – if you don't get a rollocking. I'm too old now and don't have the urge. Time with my family is important, so I avoid working evenings, and weekends are sacrosanct.

**Your latest book, *Britain – The Cookbook*, is packed with mouth-watering British food. What was the inspiration for it?**

I'd been travelling round the country for *This Morning*, meeting local food producers who were so passionate about their produce – such as Duerr's, who have been making jam since 1881, and The Grasmere Gingerbread Shop. The business started in 1854 and is now run by Andrew Hunter and his partner, Joanne. The gingerbread recipe is so secret, even Joanne doesn't know it – there's a copy in a bank vault. I loved these people and wanted to celebrate great British food, so the book is full of recipes using these special ingredients.

## 10 copies up for grabs!

For your chance to win a copy of Phil Vickery's new book, *Britain – The Cookbook* (£20, Mitchell Beazley), just tell us who won this year's *Hell's Kitchen*. To enter, call 09056 520 311\* (ROI 1516 303 192), or text the word WOCOMP1 followed by a space and your answer, then your name, house number and postcode to 86611\*\* (ROI 53307), e.g., WOCOMP1 answer chloe 14 NN01 LLL.

\*BT calls cost £1 per call (ROI £1.50). Cost from other networks may be higher. \*\*Texts cost £1 per entry (ROI £1.20) plus network charges. Service provider: Eckoh (UK) Ltd, Herts HP3 9HN. Subject to availability. Please see page 71 for Woman's Own competition terms and conditions. Lines close on midnight, 19 October 2007.

