

**What did you eat last night?**

Beetroot risotto with smoked haddock. I do have a soft spot for risotto and I always look out for it on a menu.

Favourite cooking smell?

I have two – roast beef and the crackling smell of a barbeque.

Best childhood dish?

The most delicious kebab – *souvlaki* and *sheftalia* in pitta bread. I am half Greek-Cypriot and it's the first thing I eat when I go to Cyprus.

What's in your fridge?

As I eat out more than I do in, I like to buy fresh produce as and when I need it. I tend to always have eggs, Greek yoghurt, a selection of different cheeses, lemons, tomatoes, broccoli, tomato chutney, flaxseed oil and cassis.

Last restaurant you ate at?

Rivington Grill – quality and affordable no-fuss food, but where it excels is the very personalised, consistently good service, and its location overlooking Dubai's magical fountains.

Samantha Wood

Founder of the UAE restaurant reviewing website FOODIVA. NET talks of her love for rare beef burgers, cheese, and of course, dining out.

TEXT VHAIRI WALKER

The most extreme thing you have eaten?

Kudu – that's antelope from South Africa. Cooked grilled, it's just heavenly and very healthy thanks to its low-fat content.

Take out or dine out?

Dine out of course. As the founder of FOODIVA, not only is it my job to experience new eateries, but I also love selecting a restaurant, deciding what to wear, perusing a menu and ultimately savouring my meal. I never want the night to end.

Are you a good cook?

Depends who you ask. I love trying out new dishes on unsuspecting guests. It's all in the recipe for me. I firmly believe simple dishes with fresh ingredients work best. I am not one for over-complicated cuisine and shrouding dishes with sauces.

What's your ultimate comfort food?

A beef burger cooked rare. I am delighted a New York's Shake Shack has just opened here.

Who would your fantasy dinner guests be?

Mireille Giuliano (ex-CEO of Veuve Cliquot, turned best-selling author), Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker's character in *Sex and the City*), George Clooney (I know it's a cliché but eye candy aside, I truly admire his social activism and humanitarian work), and Princess Diana (clearly she's not around anymore, but I am one of her biggest fans, so perhaps Prince William instead).

One food you can't live without?

My desert island request would be cheese, cheese and more cheese. I make a really good Swiss cheese fondue.

Chocolate or cheese?

Cheese of course, but I do have a penchant for very dark chocolate, especially if it's Pierre Marcolini.

Which cuisine do you enjoy the most?

So many for different reasons, but if I had to pick one it would be Japanese. I travelled around the country last summer and loved the variety, particularly specialty restaurants for *sashimi*, *tempura*, *teppanyaki*, *yakitori* and *kaiseki*.

What would your last meal be?

A glass of bubbles to start with – preferably Dom Pérignon. Then a beef fillet cooked rare topped with Café de Paris butter, and sides of mustard mashed potato and green beans with garlic – accompanied by a very smooth French red.