

Keeping it simple

Nigella Lawson knows that sometimes the best meals are the ones that don't take much time, writes

SHANNON MOLLOY

CELEBRITY chef Nigella Lawson could be just about anywhere in the world, but grate a lemon zest and she's instantly transported back to Italy.

It was there that Lawson (pictured) ventured in her gap year after school, knowing no one but wanting to experience Florence.

To this day, that distinct citrus scent makes her mind fondly wander back to Tuscany's historic capital.

"I immediately feel uplifted by the smell of lemon," Lawson says.

"I remember living there [Italy], seeing the lemon trees, and it's an instant hit of joy.

"It's the same kind of thing with roast chicken – that smell reminds me of my mother's kitchen when I was a girl, and I get great comfort from that. Actually, she used to squeeze a lemon and put it inside the chicken, so maybe that's why those two are so special."

Lawson describes smell as an "intense transmission of emotion". Words aren't necessary – a memory comes flooding back and you're left to "drink up what's there", she says.

"Not only do I take pleasure in it, but it's a way of passing on the seed of happiness to my children," Lawson says. "I think that's an important part of them cooking, too."

It hasn't been the easiest time of late for the British culinary queen, who has built an empire on TV shows including her latest, *Simply Nigella*, along with books and other business ventures.

In June 2013, she endured



the very public breakdown of her marriage, a bitter court case involving two former assistants charged with fraud and a series of shocking revelations in the UK press.

After difficult or stressful days, Lawson says she gets great comfort from being in the kitchen and undertaking process-driven tasks.

"I find stirring or chopping and standing at the stove makes me feel quite calm," she says.

"Food has this wonderful ability to connect me with the world in a way that makes me feel grounded.

"Most of the time ... doing something that's purely manual labour is a way of grabbing a few moments out of that non-stop world.

"Even if something takes just 10 minutes to cook, that's 10 minutes when you're away from all the non-stoppery of normal life.

"That's what it feels like for me. I think that's why I strive for things to be simple."

Simple is the basis of her latest series, in which recipes are designed to be delicious but not overwhelming like most on TV tend to be.

Food should make you feel good while you're cooking it, not just while you're eating it, Lawson says. "It's food that makes your life easier, really concentrating on flavour.

"You can cook simply and get a great complexity of flavour. I'm not saying 'simple' means just primary cupboard food. You can play

around while keeping the processes simple."

Lawson offers an example of a simple but tasty dish. It's a ramen she makes when time is short.

"Soak the noodles, boil an egg, chop up a couple of vegetables. I get the broth ready-made but I flavour it, binging in a bit of soy sauce and miso with a bit of ginger," she says.

"Cook some prawns, toss a bit of garlic and cinnamon star anise in a pan or wok. Then it's just in with the noodles and you're done.

"You get something really great and tasty at the end of it with barely any effort."

SIMPLY NIGELLA
TUESDAY, 8PM, ABC

DIVING BACK INTO TROUBLED WATERS

DAVID "Bucky" Buckland says Port Lincoln locals used to make fun of the abalone divers, joking about how they all made a fortune working just a couple of months a year.

And that may be true, but it wasn't until Discovery Channel's *Abalone Wars* shone a spotlight on the industry that people realised just how dangerous abalone-diving can be.

The Southern Ocean is home to more sharks per square kilometre than almost anywhere in the world, and Bucky (below) has lost four loved ones – family and friends – to them over the years.

Anyone who has watched the series would wonder why the divers keep risking their lives.

"It's a pretty good lifestyle – good money, plenty of time off," Bucky says. "I enjoy diving and I don't know what else I can do at my age.

"Ask Greg Pickering [who returns for season five after a series away] the same question – I mean, he's been inside of one [in 2013, a shark bit Pickering on the head and shoulder, and left one of its teeth in his eye].

"There's no way I'd still be doing it if that happened to me."

ABALONE WARS
WEDNESDAY,
8.30PM, DISCOVERY
CHANNEL
By Andrew
Fenton

