

My best things in life... GIZZI ERSKINE

THE RETRO-GLAM TV FOODIE DREAMS OF RECIPES, UNWINDS BY COOKING AND FEELS UN-DRESSED WITHOUT HER FALSE EYELASHES

WORDS NIKI BROWES

BEST INGREDIENT: Growing up, I spent a lot of time in Asia, so have an affinity with Asian ingredients. Lime leaves are one of the things I absolutely love. I buy boxes of frozen ones from London's Chinatown. A great thing to do with them is bung them in a noodle broth and add chicken or fish. They liven up your taste buds.

BEST RESTAURANT: I'm not a sucker for glitzy restaurants - I like places that are more atmospheric, where you can get great food, a good bottle of wine and the chance for a good natter. Bentley's (bentleys.org) in Mayfair is a shellfish restaurant that ticks all of the above.

BEST COOKING TIP: Good-quality kitchen equipment will never hold you back. I go to the Japanese Knife Company (japaneseknifecompany.com). While expensive - a single knife can set you back £250 - they are investment pieces you'll use for life.

BEST DRINK: I have a slight routine on Sundays, which is odd, because I'm generally disorganised. I have to have a Bloody Mary, followed by a roast. It's the law.

BEST INDULGENCE: Some people might find it weird, but I'm really into taxidermy. I've mainly collected birds. I also love rooting around in antique shops and thrift markets for peculiar things. I've even been known to buy bones in the past. My home is quite bizarre, a bit of a time warp, just like me.

BEST BEAUTY BUY: There are two things I can't live without: Lancôme Artliner eyeliner - it's like a pen and does the best flick. And false eyelashes. I buy mine from Mac or Shu Uemura. I've been wearing them for so long that putting them on is second nature.

BEST WEBSITE: I wear mostly vintage, and for smart, elegant evening clothes I use a website called Juno Says Hello (junosayshello.com). They find things for me. It's super-useful.

BEST ICON: A Danish actress from the 1960s, called Anna Karina. She was married to director Jean-Luc Godard and was his muse. She was like the Kate Moss of the 1960s.

BEST TV SHOW: An American series, called *No Reservations* with chef Anthony Bourdain. He travels all over the world to try out local food, including the more obscure stuff. He was the original bad-boy chef. I'm *totally* in love with him.

BEST ERA: The 1960s, because people started to think differently about the world, opening their eyes to new ideas and discoveries. Culturally and politically, everything changed, which I think is fascinating.

BEST WAY TO SPEND A WEEKEND: I love walking around east London with my boyfriend. Typically, we'll go to antique shops, visit food markets and buy meat that I then cook on the Sunday with my family in Wimbledon.

BEST WAY TO UNWIND: Cooking. It's sad, isn't it? But you know how exercise clears your mind? I get that when I'm cooking.

BEST BOOK: Food encyclopaedia *Larousse Gastronomique* (Hamlyn, £60). It's on my bedside table. When I sleep, I dream of food.

BEST WAY TO GET INSPIRATION: From my family, who are quite creative. Dad's a photographer and Mum was a model. She travelled all around the world when she was young and is very open-minded. She used to cook exotic food for us when I was growing up, so she's been a massive influence on me.

BEST FRIEND: Martha. We've known each other since we were two years old and went to the same school. Today, we live totally different lives - she's married and lives in the country with horses, while I'm very much a city girl - but we're still bosom buddies. Like me, she looks quite retro. We used to joke that she was Marilyn Monroe and I was Jane Russell in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*.

BEST THING IN LIFE: Family. They're your glue, aren't they? ■
Gizzi can be seen in Channel 4's Cookery School every afternoon, Monday to Friday, until the end of March



FROM TOP: Gizzi loves antique shops; Lancôme eyeliner; Bentley's fish restaurant; reading a food encyclopaedia in bed; and wearing false eyelashes



FROM TOP: 1960s actress Anna Karina; a Bloody Mary is Gizzi's Sunday must; lime leaves are a kitchen staple

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY.COM, FRESH FOOD IMAGES, LFI, REX, STOCKFOOD