



Lynton's country upbringing shines through in his cooking

GOING BACK TO HIS ROOTS

Northern Territory native and runner-up of *MasterChef Australia* 2013, Lynton Tapp talks about his love for Indigenous ingredients such as bush bananas and conkerberries

Lynton Tapp has come a long way since his days caring for livestock in Australia's Northern Territory. While working on his family's cattle station in Katherine, he would occasionally fill in for the station cooks, whipping up big batches of food for the workers and experimenting with new dishes whenever he could. His culinary skills took him all the way to *MasterChef Australia* 2013, where he was crowned runner-up. Following this foray into television, the now-28-year-old then went on to release his first cookbook, *Outback Pantry* in 2015, before landing a hosting job on the Australian TV cooking series *My Market Kitchen* a year later.

Lynton admits that growing up in outback Australia shaped his knowledge of, and passion for, food; in particular, 'bush tucker' – Indigenous ingredients that grow in the Australian wild, such as bush bananas, finger limes, conkerberries and wattleseed – and cooking according to the seasons.



Lynton Tapp is an advocate of fresh, seasonal cooking



Q How did your interest in food come about?

Food has always been a big part of my life. Growing up, I had an Aboriginal nanny who would take me on walks through the bush, teaching me about bush tucker. Then when my sister broke her back in an accident, I prepared her meals while she was recovering. I also cooked quite a bit on my family's cattle station; we were about three hours away from the closest town, so every month we'd drive there to buy large amounts of potatoes, pumpkins, onions and tinned vegetables, and then work out how to use them until we next replenished our supply.

Q Can you tell us a bit more of Indigenous Australian ingredients?

Many Australian chefs use native foods in their cooking – they look to their backyard for native edible ingredients. I love to wrap barramundi (a fish) in paperbark, and cook it in hot coals. The paperbark imparts a

smoky flavour to the fish as it burns.

Q Do you think the use of these ingredients will catch on with home cooks?

Yes. They're already used a lot in the restaurant industry but now we're starting to see Australians becoming more curious about such ingredients. These foods are part of our heritage, after all, so we should be proud to use them.

Q What changes would you like to see in the food industry?

Many Australian chefs use native foods

The end of mass production. I'd like for us to go back to growing things seasonally – that is, growing food that thrives only during a particular season and is harvested when its flavour is at its peak. This is when the food is its absolute freshest, most flavourful and most affordable. This'll take the pressure off the environment, our farmers and resources.

Q What's your approach to food when travelling?

It's adventurous. I love checking out the stalls and markets where you only see locals. And I never go to a restaurant that puts its menu out the front because that's a dead giveaway that it's a tourist spot.

Q Where do you love to eat in Darwin?

Rapid Creek Markets, and a restaurant called Hanuman, which is owned by my friend, Jimmy Shu. Jimmy offers three different cuisines – Thai, Indian and Peranakan (Straits Chinese) – and the food is authentic.

Q What do you like to cook at home?

Usually meat and vegetables, but my girlfriend loves pasta so I cook that a lot, too. I always have Asian condiments like *sambal* (chilli paste) and the Vietnamese *nuoc cham* (made from fish sauce, lime juice, palm sugar and chilli) on hand for extra flavour. ✈