

Speaking *Greek* with MasterChef Australia's George Calombaris

 By [Jessica Tennant](#)

28 Jul 2016

MasterChef Australia co-judge, chef and restaurateur George Calombaris is back in South Africa for this weekend's Good Food & Wine Show, where foodies now have the chance to play 'MasterChef'. The Chef's Table is an interactive culinary masterclass new on the event's menu and accompanies the relaunch of the rebranded GF&WS.



Calombaris' trip to Johannesburg follows the recent launch of his fifth cookbook: *Greek*, and with Women's Month commencing on Monday, it's wonderful that his mum has had an influence on his love for the cuisine and even contributed a chapter of recipes.

I asked Calombaris more about this gorgeous bundle of Greek goodness and why he's excited to be one of the headline chefs at the GF&WS this year...

Your new cookbook features traditional Greek food with a modern twist. In your video on Penguin's website (video embedded below), you mention, "It's Greek, but it doesn't look typically Greek. It's not cliché." Explain how you've modernised one of your standout dishes and what this adds to the classic version.

Many of those recipes are my interpretation of the Greek cuisine and dishes that have inspired me on my travels back to Greece. For example, with the souvlakis I have taken inspiration from the classic gyros – typically using chicken and pork, but given them a modern twist.

■ You've even taken Eton mess and given it a Greek spin, calling it Hellenic mess. What was the thought behind this?

I loved how such simple ingredients can create something so delicious. Therefore, I decided to incorporate your typical Greek flavours - rosewater and ouzo - and it was a winner.

■ What do you love most about Greek cuisine and how does your newest cookbook portray this?

I love its simplicity and how the simple dishes can be bursting with flavour. Greek food is my heritage, it is what I know, it is what I love and it is what I'm proud of.

■ How has your mother influenced your love for the cuisine and cheffing/the restaurant business? What is your fondest cooking memory growing up?

She definitely influenced my love for the Greek cuisine and how food can bring people together. I used to love it when mum would make me Avgolemono (egg and lemon soup).

■ As your fifth cookbook, what have you learnt from compiling previous ones? What makes this one extra special, or what is it about this one that you're most proud of?

It took me three years to bring this book to life. It is always a long and very enjoyable process. My mum also contributed

recipes for a chapter in the book. I think I am most proud that my kids can see this and see the work I have done.

■ Why a lemon on the cover? Who illustrated it, and who is the magician food photographer?

Lemons are much used in Mediterranean cooking. The artist was Evi O, from Sydney, and the photographer was Earl Carter.

■ Comment on your trip to South Africa for the GF&WS:

- **What do you think of South Africa's foodie scene, fresh produce, etc.?** I love biltong and, in terms of the foodie scene, I cannot wait to check out the new eateries in and around Joburg.



George Calombaris

- **What do you think of the local cuisine?** I have heard it is regional but I am excited to explore a bit more whilst I am there.

- **Why are you excited to be one of the headline chefs this year?** I am excited to be in South Africa to share my recipes and style of cooking, and to meet all the local supporters.

The Joburg show takes place 29-31 July at the Ticketpro Dome. Opens at 10am and closes at 9pm on Friday and Saturday, and 6pm on Sunday. Tickets are on sale at ticketpros.co.za and will also be available at the door.

The Chef's Table costs R300 or R800 depending on the chef, and is limited to 40 people per class, so booking in advance is advised.

Also catch Calombaris at the Chef's Open Theatre on Saturday and Sunday.

For the full programme, go to the GF&WS [website](#).

About George Calombaris

One of Australia's top chefs, George Calombaris' style of cuisine has earned him many accolades and much respect from culinary aficionados at home and abroad. His Greek heritage was central in his upbringing; indeed, it is his trademark today. George's career has been exceptional from the beginning. With many accolades to his name, and a string of restaurants where he earned his colours (including Fenix, Reserve, The Press Club Restaurant and Bar, Maha Bar & Grill, Hellenic Republic and Pm 24), he's also known for his cookbooks, his contribution as judge to MasterChef Australia and his entrepreneurial skills, particularly in raising the profile of Greek cuisine in Australia.

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

Jess is Senior Editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com. She is also a contributing writer. marketingnews@bizcommunity.com

- #BODUHB: Chris Weylandt on the basics of retail - 20 Oct 2017
- Starbucks SA launches rewards programme - 1 Feb 2017
- #BizTrends2017: Emerging trends in merchant payments - 27 Jan 2017
- #EntrepreneurMonth: Umhlanga-based founders *buff* up their business portfolio - 29 Nov 2016
- #EntrepreneurMonth: Debra Bouwer, Shari Akal and their budding flower business - 24 Nov 2016

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>