

Spotted



Half of Brit boy band Blue (Simon and Duncan, pictured left) catching some rides at Wild Wadi. **Members of the Australian**

cricket team posing for shots in front of the colourful glass sculpture in the lobby of Atlantis The Palm.

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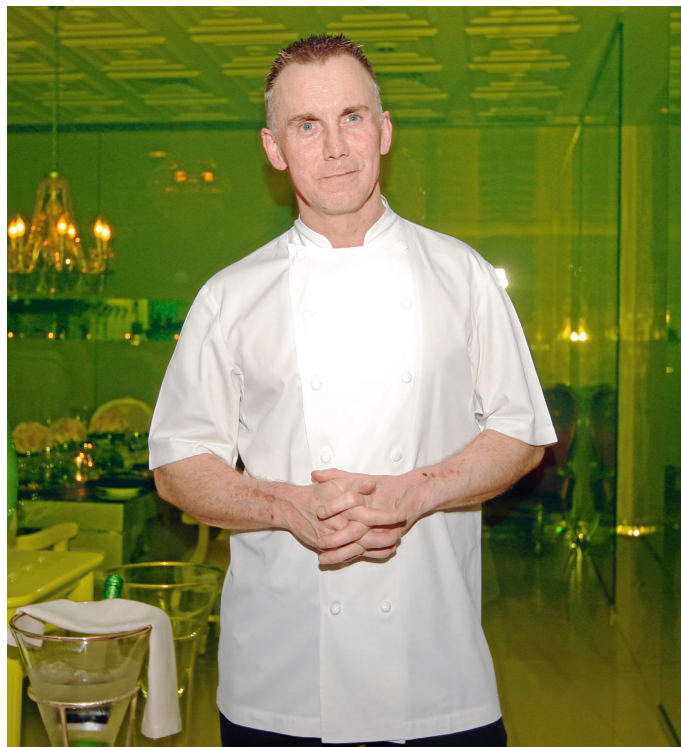
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Hot seat

Gary Rhodes

As the British celebrity chef, 52, celebrated the fifth anniversary of his Rhodes Mezzanine restaurant in Grosvenor House, *Rob Garratt* cornered him for a chat



You're celebrating five years in Dubai – you must be thrilled.

I'm really delighted. When we first signed up for this I thought five years would be a lifetime, but it's flown past, probably because I've enjoyed it so much. I never expected to be here so long, but at the moment we're hoping to still be here in another ten years.

It's been a rather turbulent five years too, with the global economic meltdown. How have you survived the storm?

One of the great things is that everybody has to eat, and if you just get good food at the right price, people will always come out to eat. Even in a credit crunch you find everybody wants a source of entertainment, and the greatest social point in the world is the

dinner table. It brings family and friends together, and that's one of the joys of being in this industry. There will always be customers, and if you look after your customers they'll always look after you.

'I want to shout about British food louder than ever'

You're a champion of British food, and it's been a good year for Britain with the Royal Jubilee and the Olympics. Has it helped the reputation of the country's cuisine?

I think it certainly has. It's given Britain a whole new status and I want to make

sure we can scream and shout about British food louder than ever, because in many countries it's still laughed at. **True, it's the butt of many a joke, yet more and more British restaurants keep popping up. What's the secret to the Rhodes brand?**

I think it has an element of surprise. When we started [Rhodes Mezzanine], one of the first things I featured was a dessert called jam roly-poly, which was laughed off the table. But when I took it off the menu, people kept asking me to bring it back.

So, what's in store over the next five years?

One of the things I love about being a chef is that in 35 years of professional cooking I've never stopped learning – and that's the beauty of being here [in Dubai]. I think I'm going to learn so much about different international cuisine, because of the vast audience we have to entertain here.

Apart from your own venues, where do you eat in Dubai?

If you're talking about haute cuisine, there are great chefs such as Pierre Gagnaire [Reflets, InterContinental Festival City] and Yannick Alléno [STAY at One&Only The Palm] – they are three-Michelin star chefs I sort of worship. But I also love eating in Arabic restaurants out here – it's a huge culinary education.

Last time we spoke to Gordon Ramsay, he told us he could beat you in a fight with one arm. What do you say to that?

Really, Gordon, it's immaterial whether you can do that or not, because I'll lay you out with my cooking in the kitchen! *Rhodes Mezzanine, Grosvenor House (04 399 8888).*

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