

FOOD

Key ingredients

Some of New Zealand's top foodies invite us into their home kitchens, reveal their must-have staples and share ideas and tips with *Britt Mann*.

Home cook and author Annabel Langbein splits her time between houses in Wanaka and Auckland. She is pictured in her Remuera, Auckland, kitchen.

I couldn't live without lemons, garlic or ginger. And having a little armoury of sauces means I can change the flavours in a dish really easily.

This is the third or fourth kitchen I've designed. Right next to the hob, I have these big pull-out drawers where I have all my sauces and oils. And on the other side I have drawers with all the spices. All my flavourings are close to hand.

In the freezer I keep things like bacon, and in the fridge I always have parmesan cheese.

If I want a quick pasta meal I can grab a can of artichokes and fry off some bacon and throw in seasonal vegetables – whether it's broccoli or spinach – and lots of parmesan cheese.

If I've invited people for dinner and only remembered at the last minute, I stop at the fish shop and get a really fresh piece of fish.

I'll put on some rice the minute I get in the door and then I'll marinate the fish – whether it's a quick homemade teriyaki sauce or just sweet Thai chilli sauce with a bit of fish sauce and lime zest through it as a glaze. Or I might put Moroccan spices on top.

You flash-roast the fish in a really hot oven for 10 minutes. It makes it so easy. If I've gone for Asian flavours I'll have some bok choy or spinach or if it's Moroccan I will have made some couscous and put in cherry tomatoes, cucumber and flaked almonds. And I'll serve it on a platter, so it feels abundant.

There's an ingredient which we find more and more as New Zealand becomes more multicultural – belacan, which is a dried shrimp paste. It's grey and incredibly unappetising but has the ability to confer wonders to your sauces and your stir-fry meals, adding this lovely depth of umami flavour.

I always try and have some yummy cheese in my fridge, and a nice glass of wine. I love goat's cheese, but unless it's running off a bus and onto the pavement, I can eat pretty much anything.

My kitchen in Wanaka is kind of my dream kitchen and I don't think I got anything wrong there. In my kitchen in Auckland, what I like is that I can stand at the bench and look out the window at the garden.

It's slightly contemplative – you can create these little moments in your life, whether you're standing there with a cup of coffee or chopping some onions. It gives you some space to think.

Langbein will be hosting cooking demonstrations at The Food Show in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland this year. Her 25th book, Essential: Best Ever Meals for Busy Lives, is out now.



Photograph: Jason Dandey

Restaurateur and TV chef Michael Van de Elzen is best known for his stint as the host of top-rating TV show, The Food Truck. He'll be among the demonstrators at The Food Show in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland this year. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Muriwai, near Auckland.

We always have four-litre bottles of water ready to be carbonated at any one time in the fridge. We'd probably go through eight litres a day. The kids call it "spicy water". We haven't told them it's actually sparkling water, because it's so cute. It's a treat – "If you're good, I'm going to give you some spicy water." They're like, "OOOOH!"

Dijon mustard is an absolute must. I'm addicted to it, I add it to absolutely everything. It's such a fantastic flavour enhancer. I'm a fan of the Grove extra virgin avocado oil, because of the colour and what you can do with it. It makes everything look so much better.

There's always an old jar of dressing in the fridge. We'll just make up a jar and once that's gone we'll make up a new flavour. We're constantly experimenting.

Nine times out of 10, there'll be cooked beans in the fridge, too. The ones in spring water – they're a real good go-to. You want to bulk up a meal? Chuck some beans in. They're a good wholesome, earthy ingredient, plus they've got heaps of protein.

I'm right into wraps at the moment. I'm probably a little bit behind the times there. You can put anything inside a wrap. I ask everyone else in the family, "Does anyone want a wrap for lunch?" Everyone's like, "No, thank you."

I've got those Good Taste dips – the black bean and beetroot, and smoky white bean and garlic flavours – they work really well as your base. Then you chuck in some avocado, lettuce, a bit of chilli and some tomato. And maybe some shredded meat and some tamari-roasted almonds.

My sourdough bread starter has been going for 12, 13 years. It's called Stan. Stan lives in the fridge and Stan needs to be fed every day. We just put in a bit of flour and every so often a little bit of sugar just to keep him bubbling away.

If we go on holiday, we have to get someone to look after Stan, or we take Stan with us. I don't trust anyone else to feed him. We've got a farm with lots of animals. A chicken can go a day without being fed, but Stan can't.

The house is about 100 years old; we've been here a year. We're building an outdoor kitchen at the moment. There'll be a big fire with a steel rack inside so you can cook on that, and you'll be able to shut it so it becomes like a coal oven.

There's a sink going in alongside the fire, and there'll be power out there, and a fridge. There'll be a chopping board and running water so you don't really need to go back inside. This outdoor kitchen's going to be the bomb.





Renee Couller runs Coco's Cantina, a beloved Italian establishment on Auckland's K Road, with her sister Damaris. She lives with her partner and daughter in the Auckland CBD.

I always have olive oil, parmesan, olives, garlic – that's not very exciting is it? And there's always some form of pasta.

For a quick dinner I'll use whatever else is around. I've always got parsley in the garden so I throw in parsley, anchovies and chilli flakes with those ingredients which are kind of staples.

We've got a 4-year-old daughter who likes salty things – she loves olives, anchovies, gherkins, so she can kind of eat what we eat.

I put miso paste on toast, make miso soup and throw it into stir-fries. It gives depth of flavour and salt. I'd throw it into anything – mostly in Asian cooking which we do a bit because it's so quick. We get a fresh fruit and veg box that's delivered once a week.

Wine is my treat. If I've opened a red and I'm not going to be at home for a few nights because I'm at work, the leftover wine might live in the fridge to go into a casserole or other cooking. I'm not allowed to have any other treats – I work at a restaurant and there's enough there.

Sometimes I have the cooking chocolate, 80 per cent stuff. It comes out of the baking box and down into the fridge.

I've had amazing kitchens in different houses that we've rented throughout Auckland. This one is small and cute and compact. I've always got my pestle and mortar, always got my crockpot and have to have gas to cook.

It's sunny so it makes you want to be in there. It's a galley kitchen so I can sandwich my daughter in right at the corner and she won't fall off, and I can stand between her and the sink and the gas cooker. She'll have a knife and a board and wash her vegetables in the sink. In bigger, more voluptuous kitchens I'd be worried that her chair was going to scoot backwards. I cook with her more in this kitchen because I can tuck her in and she's nice and safe.

When I had this really big, flash, amazing kitchen I made a lot more mess and cooked a lot more extravagantly, and for a lot more people. This house is smaller, this kitchen's smaller, so we do more barbecues and less prep. There are no three-course banquets going out of this kitchen.

Coco's Cantina will have a new look this winter, following renovations over Easter.





Celebrity chef Simon Gault lives in Drury, a rural suburb south of Auckland. His documentary, Why Are We Fat? will screen on Prime this year.

There's always almond milk in the fridge, miso paste, cheese, veges from the garden and some crazy Japanese things - wasabi or hot spicy pastes. And there's always some of my stock concentrate.

For a dinner on the go, it's kind of like opening up the magic box - what have I got? What am I going to create?

Last night I got home and I was going to cook dinner for my daughter. In the pantry I had some cricket pasta [made from insects]. It's super high protein. I got it from overseas. And I had some mince so I used some of my Mexican seasoning and I made a Mexican mince with pasta with beans out of the garden, some silver beet, carrots. It kind of varies every night.

I love having Cloudy Bay clams in the fridge, then I can do spaghetti with clams, olive oil, garlic and a bit of chilli for me. There's always fresh chillies in my fridge - I grow them or somebody gives them to me.

Nobody's going to think my treats are appealing. I have cheese in the fridge and natto, which is Japanese fermented soy beans. They're really yummy. You either love them or you hate them.

They're really good for your microbiome. Another thing I always have in my fridge is sauerkraut.

I have a Smeg steam oven which I love. It's a domestic unit; anybody can buy one. You can put your salmon, your vegetables, your potatoes on one tray, and everything cooks perfectly. It's a delicious, healthy way of cooking. And you only have one tray to wash, which is kind of cool. The worst way to cook broccoli is by boiling it. By steaming it you, retain all the nutrients.

I love my Smeg induction cooktop. A lot of people ask me, do I like to use gas to cook at home? And the answer is absolutely not - I way prefer the induction cooktop.

It's more controllable than gas, it's faster, it's cleaner to clean up, it's safer around children because they can come up and touch it and they won't burn themselves.

And it's cheaper to run. **S**