



# Kitchen Capers

A tale of two siblings indulging in a spot of fancy, tailor-made *masak-masak*

Story by Sam Yen

THINK OF IT THIS WAY. EVERY DISH HAS A STORY TO tell; whether it's the tale of a noisy wet market, the squeeze of a vacuum pack, a burning 200° oven or a greasy hawker's wok. If each dish is a tale, then *Made to Order*—a small screen sneak-peek into kitchen goings-on—is the accompanying Super Extended Director's Cut Behind-the-Scenes Documentary DVD.

More than just a mere cooking show, *Made to Order* documents brothers Guy and Michael Rubino as they engineer delicious solutions to unusual client requests. The first season (which aired on Discovery Travel & Living) saw the brothers create menus to help close a marriage proposal, complement a fashion show, seal a Korean business deal and save a wedding anniversary party. The upcoming second season sees the brothers solving even more culinary conundrums, including a challenge from a truffle connoisseur. Each feast, of course, is tailored to the requestor's exact requirements; hence it's 'made to order'.

Canadians by birth and Italian by heritage, the brothers Rubino each handle different aspects of the business. Guy is the chef, constantly creating fresh new culinary concoctions. Michael is the restaurateur and all-round wine expert. Together they both run Rain and Luce, two of Toronto's must-eat destinations.

Recently in Hong Kong to host a dinner party, the siblings are as irrepressibly jovial in person as they are on television. In between anecdotes about fleeing from a rampaging Chinese fishmonger for manhandling a lobster and good-natured old-fashioned fraternal ribbing, Guy and Michael also had plenty else to say to *Plan B's* jet-setting writer.

**First of all, how did the idea the show come about?**

**Michael (M)** An entertainment network approached us about the possibility of doing a television series. We were interested, but didn't want to do a 'how-to' cooking show. That's been done a million times

and gets so boring. So we thought, why don't we do exactly what we do, and focus on the different things and experiences that happen in a restaurant. Sort of a making-of insider's peek.

**What's been the highlight of making this series?**

**M** Getting to go to a lot of different places and parts of the world. Meeting interesting people that are in and out of our profession, which allows us to share ideas and broaden our mindset. We also produce the series, so it's a new business venture for us. By the way, television is a lot harder than it looks. We shoot over 25 hours of footage for only 22 minutes of showtime.

**Do you entertain all requests?**

**M** Nope. We vet each request; the criteria being whether or not we want to do it. We do get some ridiculously unrealistic request at times.

**Guy (G)** Each one has to have a culinary basis. It's only worth doing if there's an intellectual service that makes for good TV. This isn't *Fear Factor*. The point is for people to learn about food and wine.

**What's the biggest challenge you've faced?**

**M** Doing the TV show and running two restaurants at the same time. It's all about managing time and balancing the needs of the restaurants and our personal life, which has shrunk tremendously.

**G** Keeping up to people's expectations. Expectations are global now, so people come to the restaurant expecting us to walk on water. Oh, and spending a lot more time with Michael. Getting through that alone is a big challenge in itself.

**M** I always insist we get different seats on the plane.

**Guy, if you were to conceptualise a *Made to Order* for Michael, what would it be?**

**G** Probably to seek out a better wardrobe.

**M** There's nothing wrong with my wardrobe!

**G** I'm kidding. I'd like for him to cook dinner for me more often. There's an episode in the second season where he made me a birthday

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dinner. I was very surprised. It was very good.

**Michael, likewise.**

**M** Probably what we used to do after work. We don't do it anymore because we're too busy, but we'd invite people over after closing and cook dinner together. It doesn't even have to be complicated, just sharing your downtime with a few of our closest friends. That was fun. **You come from a very tightly-knit Italian family. What would a 'Made to Order' for your mother be like?**

**M** I'd take her back to her hometown in Italy, and have traditional beautiful Italian cuisine in the home she grew up in. I think that would make a fantastic episode.

**G** I would love to cook with her again, like I used to when I was a kid. Nowadays, when we see each other, it's usually for a very brief period. I miss getting up early in the morning, having an espresso together and talk about what we would cook and then go and do it.

**Suppose the following people request a 'Made to Order'. What would you prepare for them? George W. Bush.**

**G** Steak. Steak with a heavy, heavy rub on it. With a bit of a dry edge, Texas style. And some onion rings on the side. Classic cowboy food.

**M** I would probably throw him out of the restaurant!

**Kim Jong Il**

**M** Definitely something that encourages growth!

**G** I would think things that are very short with spiky things shooting out of it, to represent his image. Ha ha. Actually, probably very clean, very regimented food, nothing experimental at all.

**The Pope**

**G** Definitely not Italian food because that's probably what he eats all the time. Something completely opposite, like an Asian dinner.

Something that's not in the Catholic vein, which might hopefully open up his mind.

**Madonna**

**G** Something very honest, pure and simple to match her new persona because she's trying very hard not to be this naughty, sexy girl anymore. Very grown up, serious food that a wealthy mum would love to enjoy.

**Is there a scenario/setting that you would love to do, but haven't had the chance to yet.**

**G** I'm a musician, so I'd love to cook with a meal with some of my favourite musicians and artists. Not just cook for them, but have them cook with me in my kitchen where we'd talk about food and music—the two most important things in my life.

**M** Well, I'd like to meet winemakers that are passionate as I am about understanding how wine relates to food. Some get so caught up in what they're doing that they forget that people drink wine with food.

**You're filming Season 3 now. What's it going to be like?**

**M** *Made to Order* is going international. There's going to be a lot more travelling and a lot more eye candy. With this season, we really want to give people the feeling that the world is not that big a place.

**What would you never eat?**

**M** I'm not big on organs, stuff like calf's brains and things like that.

**G** I don't really like bird's nest. It's really tasteless. But I'll eat anything once, blowfish or even *chou do fou*, as long as its prepared by professionals. That's my only condition, and I stand by it. ■

*Made to Order (season 2) premiers Nov 3 (then every Thurs), 8.30pm, on Discovery Travel & Living (Astro 11).*

## Reci-pieces

Guy Rubino chooses his kitchen's five most versatile (and flavourful) ingredients. Budding chefs, pay attention!

### Fruit

*Tomato (Solanum lycopersicum)*

A versatile staple of global kitchens. Equally delicious raw (in salads), cooked (roasted), as a condiment (ketchup), sauce (salsa) or drink (juice), the tomato's inherent acidity is also used to bring out a recipe's other flavours.



### Protein

*Pork (Sus scrofa)*

Midway between white meat and red meat, pork is rich in thiamine (vitamin B1) and finds its way to the menu in a myriad of ways: chops, ham, bacon, ribs. But if you're a vegetarian or consider pork non-kosher, opt for:

*Soya Bean (Glycine max)*

Soya beans are the complete protein: one that contains all essential amino acids that the body cannot synthesise. Soya beans are also nature's great mimic—used to make vegetarian meal's invaluable textured vegetarian protein (TVP).



### Vegetable

*Daikon Radish (Raphanus sativus)*

An albino carrot that is the basis of essential Asian dishes: miso soup, *tempura*, radish hamburgers and *kimchi*. Also known as the Chinese White Radish, the vitamin C-rich daikon is also used to create elaborate garnishing to accompany dishes.



### Starch

*Rice (Oryza sativa)*

The dietary staple of over half the world, rice can be cooked as sushi, paella, flour, and even made into wine and sake. Brown rice is the healthiest variety, although white rice can be enriched to replenish nutrients lost in the refining process.



### Herb

*Coriander (Coriandrum sativum)*

Also called cilantro, this pungent herb's leaves are sprinkled over curries, fish and stir-fries, while its ground seeds are used to spice up many of life's edible pleasures.

