

All in the mix for thermal guru

She's gone from busy mum to bestselling gourmet author. BERLINDA CONTI reports.

Chatting to author, food stylist and cook Tenina Holder from her kitchen in Perth's northern suburbs feels a little like interviewing an underground cult hero from the thermal-cooking world . . . and in all honesty, she could well be the next big thing.

Quietly modest and almost a little embarrassed at the comparison, Holder is indeed a thermal-cooking guru.

Her YouTube, Facebook and Twitter sites (she calls herself @ThermoMixtress) have garnered unprecedented interest, her advanced cooking classes sell out within hours and her blog page (which amasses about 70,000 hits per month), is adored by fans the world over.

Best of all, her tastefully presented hardback, *For Food's Sake* is constantly featured on the Dymocks and Boffins Top Five bestselling cookbook lists around the nation.

That's not bad for a gal who used cooking as a creative outlet while raising five hungry children.

The Thermomix phenomenon, or

"thermal cooking" as it is commonly referred to, is epic.

Those who have one in their possession say they couldn't imagine life without one (different brands retail from \$200 to \$2000). Retail products such as ThermoChef and HotmixPro offer similar functionality to the Thermomix and Holder says her book, which is the first independent Thermomix cookbook in the retail market, is also applicable to other thermal-cooking appliances.

"This whole journey began when I worked for Kleenmaid doing cooking demonstrations at its showroom eight years ago. I'd invite people to come along and they liked my recipes, so I guess it all started from there," she says.

"I developed a blog page way before they were trendy and I think Thermomix must have found me on that. Literally out of the blue they called me and asked if I'd be responsible for their recipe development," says Holder, who also developed the first independently produced Thermomix recipe app for iPads and iPhone (Spin a Dinner) and also has an Android app for the appliance.

It was an overwhelming time for the busy mum who says what started out as a two-day-a-week consultancy, soon evolved into seven days and often nights.

"In hindsight, it was a mind-blowing experience. I did countless courses, met some amazing chefs from around the world and I travelled everywhere — Dubai, New Zealand, Europe. I attended all sorts of expos around the country, including those for gluten intolerance and dietary restrictions," she says of her three-year tenure.

Holder's desire to produce a beautiful book with dishes "more about the food rather than the appliance" is what led her to dig out her favourite recipes and share them with others by way of pantry staples, starters, breads, soups, mains and outrageously decadent desserts.

"All the recipes in the book are about flavour and they're very achievable. Kids need to like the food too, so it was really important to make the book family friendly," says Holder, who works on the



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principle of making ingredients from scratch. Her umami

paste is her go-to ingredient.

"Starting from scratch is my mantra. That's the great thing — you can make your powder or your paste for a recipe, or store it so it's always available," she says.

"The umami paste is based on the fifth flavour in Japanese cuisine. In a lot of Asian food MSG is used to create the same flavour but the paste is a recipe I developed through trial and error.

"I've had people say to me they made a terrible soup but by adding the umami paste, it saved the day."

What's refreshing about the book is its integration of traditional cooking methods. It's not entirely focused on making everything in a Thermomix and will appeal to the masses.

Holder's second book, *Keeping it Simple*, is due for release later this year. **F**



Tenina's umami paste

Makes: one small jam jar

300g roma tomatoes, cubed
90g parmesan cheese, cubed
80g walnuts, toasted
5g dulse sea vegetable flakes
5g balsamic vinegar
2-3 anchovy fillets

Place tomatoes into TM bowl and cook 10 minutes 100C/Reverse + speed 1. Press cooled pulp through a fine sieve and separate solids from liquids. Reserve liquid. Place parmesan and walnuts into clean, dry TM bowl and mill 8 seconds speed 9. Add remaining ingredients, including reserved liquid, and blend 30 seconds speed 4, scraping down as necessary. Serve with crostini, add to a cheese platter as a spread, stir through hot soups, add to risottos or rub on to uncooked chicken breast, wrap in sliced mozzarella and bacon and cook on a hot grill. **F**

Tenina's chicken rendang

Serves: 4-6

1 tsp cardamom seeds
6 kaffir lime leaves
2 sticks cinnamon
4 whole star anise
100g eschalots (shallots)
5 cloves garlic
2 lemongrass stalks, white part only
ginger, thumb-sized piece, peeled
turmeric, thumb-sized piece, peeled
30g palm sugar
50g water
2 tsp sea salt
400ml tin coconut cream
4-6 pieces chicken Maryland or thigh and breast, skin on

Place cardamom, lime leaves, cinnamon and star anise into TM bowl and cook 10 for minutes, Varoma, speed 2. Remove from bowl, set aside. Place eschalots, garlic, lemongrass, ginger, turmeric, palm sugar and water into TM bowl and blend for 1 minute, speed 9. Add spices back into bowl and add salt and coconut cream. Cook for 15 minutes, Varoma, speed 2. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 160C. Pour a small amount of the sauce into a heavy casserole dish. Arrange chicken in dish and pour remaining sauce over, making sure chicken is well coated. Cover and bake for 90 minutes. Remove cover and increase heat to 200C. Cook for a further 30 minutes until sauce is reduced, a rich caramel colour is achieved and the chicken skin is crispy. Serve with steamed rice. **F**



For Food's Sake, by Tenina Holder, is published by Hub and Spoke Publishing, \$49.99

Tenina Holder is an internet sensation. Picture: Rob Duncan

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