

Chef's comedy mentor sets up in New Zealand

Extracts from article

The English chef who inspired TV sitcom and butter-promoting kitchen comedian Lenny Henry has come to New Zealand and opened a café restaurant.

Mild-mannered cook **Nigel Marriage** – head chef for the famous Raymond Blanc for four years at Les Quatre Seasons in the UK – spent months guiding comical Henry through the intricate ins and outs of life in the kitchen.

Many of the experiences Henry picked up during his time amid the hustle and bustle of a busy kitchen feature as themes and sketches in the British comedy series Chef.

“Lenny used to eat in the restaurant I ran in Berkshire,” said **Nigel Marriage** from his eatery on Auckland’s North Shore.

“Chefs were starting to make big news at that time and Lenny had the idea for a series based around a chef. He eventually asked us if he could spend some time with us in the kitchen – which he did over a period of about 6 months. We made sure Lenny experienced the whole range of kitchen duties.” **Mr Marriage** said.

He wasn’t too keen on skinning rabbits or preparing live snails, but he was surprisingly nimble for a big guy. Once we made him sew up poussin (baby chicken) which he actually managed really well.

Lenny is a really nice guy who had a lot of respect for the fact that his learning ground was also a working kitchen with patrons to be served.

He never joked around or acted the way he does in the series, but just quietly observed during the frantic times.” **Marriage** said.

“I know Lenny has a passion for cooking so he probably appreciated what was going on.”

Nigel said his new café concentrated on delicatessen-style foods such as pates, preserves, terrines and chutneys, although he was keen on developing the property’s potential for small scale catering services.