“I was never told that I couldn’t do something. I was never given any constraints, so I never accepted any”.

– Maggie Beer
Maggie Beer is a South Australian Icon, an internationally recognised restaurateur, a multi-million dollar business owner, a TV Host (The Cook and the Chef, Masterchef, The Great Australian Bake Off), and a bestselling author of five Cookbooks; (including The Tuscan Cook and Maggies Harvest). But, Maggie wasn’t born with a silver (dessert) spoon in her mouth. She has worked incredibly hard for the success that she enjoys today.

In addition to her work in the Restaurant Industry, Maggie Beer has received numerous awards including, the 2010 Senior Australian of the Year Award and induction into the Order Of Australia in 2012. She has also founded the Maggie Beer Foundation, which is aimed at improving the quality of life for Senior Australians.

Despite not having any formal training as a chef, Beer has accumulated a triumphant career spanning almost five decades. Her only paid cooking job was at a Scottish sailing school during a European trip in her early twenties. She stated: “I used the whole of their larder for the four-month season in eight weeks because I’m a very generous cook, that’s the only way I know how to cook”.

After relocating from Sydney to the Barossa Valley, Maggie and her husband Colin established the Farm Shop in 1979 which morphed into the Barossa Pheasant Farm Restaurant later that year. The restaurant became known for serving locally sourced pheasant as well as a pate, known as Pheasant Farm Pate. Maggie and Colin operated the hugely successful restaurant until 1993.

Later, she became a partner in the Charlick’s Feed Store restaurant in Ebenezer Place, located in the Adelaide city centre.

Currently, Beer operates a business in the Barossa which produces a range of gourmet foods, including Pheasant Farm Pate, quince paste, verjuice and gourmet ice creams. She co-hosted the ABC television cooking program The Cook and the Chef with Simon Bryant, who was the Head Chef at the Hilton Adelaide for more than 10 years. She has also appeared several times as a guest judge and guest masterclass presenter on MasterChef Australia.

Beer has written books about food and food preparation, as well as co-authoring a book with noted chef Stephanie Alexander.

One of her co-written books, Stephanie Alexander and Maggie Beer’s Tuscan Cook, has been translated into five different languages. In 2012 she participated in Who Do You Think You Are, a show which uncovered a convicted bigamist in her family history.

In April 2015, Beer and Matt Moran were announced as the judges of the second season of The Great Australian Bake Off, which aired on LifeStyle Food from 13 October 2015.

“There is nothing quite as seductive as doing what you love, and having others love it too.”
– Maggie Beer

**Overview**

**Career**

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Early Life

Maggie Beer was born Margaret Anne Ackermann in Sydney in January 1945, to Ronald Ackermann, who has German ancestry from his paternal grandparents, and Doreen Carter, who has English ancestry from her maternal great-grandparents.

She grew up with her family in Sydney’s western suburbs. Beer’s parents faced issues with bankruptcy as she was growing up and re-invented themselves as caterers. She stated this contributed to her strong work ethic later in life.

Beer did not complete her high school education, instead choosing to leave school to help the family at the age of 14 and worked in various different jobs, including one as a elevator operator in a New Zealand department store and an assistant to a senior geophysicist for British Petroleum in Libya before returning to Sydney in 1968.

Beer has traced her passion for food to her childhood: “Food was vital; there was a real interest in food and its quality and an obsession with freshness. Cooking was just accepted, it was part of the norm.”

The Maggie Beer Foundation, which brings together global and national research and ideas about improving quality of life for people in aged care, was launched in April 2014.

“Food is not just sustenance, it’s pleasure. And it doesn’t matter what age we are, we need pleasure; it feeds the soul as well as the body. That feeling of something to look forward to, something that will delight. It’s probably more important as we age than before because the choices of those in aged care are limited.”

Beer says while it takes time to change cultures, the foundation has just finished its first masterclass, giving grants to 30 cooks and chefs from aged-care facilities across Victoria.

“It was a really intensive three-and-a-half-day workshop to understand their problems and impediments, and to celebrate what they already did well, and to share all the good things.”

Watch

Interview with Maggie Beer

Maggie Beer on the economy of business and the good food life

A Current Affair - Maggie Beer Foundation

“Cooking is hard work, but when it is done with love, it really is a pleasure.”

– Maggie Beer

creating great leaders
Maggie Beer is unstoppable as she sets about expanding her eponymous gourmet food line with a new greenfields kitchen around the corner from her legendary Pheasant Farm.

“There’s no way I would sell up because it’s my name,” she said, brushing off reports she was planning a stockmarket float to fund the move. “Giving the business my name was the biggest mistake I ever made. Nobody could ever care about it with the same attention to detail like me.

“Getting bigger — and bringing in investment — takes some financial pressure off us, so we’re looking at the options and will make a decision next year. A stockmarket float is just one of the options but not the only one. There’s nothing definite yet.”

At 70, she’s the original celebrity foodie on a whirlwind round of book launches for the release of Maggie Beer’s Spring Harvest Recipes that brings together all her signature dishes from the spring chapter of Maggie’s Harvest with the lavish tapestry cover.

As always, the recipes highlight her philosophy of using the best seasonal produce and treating it simply so the flavours speak for themselves.

In many ways Beer owes her love of food to her parents, who owned an aluminium-ware factory that folded when she was 14 because her father was a dreamer and went bankrupt when he couldn’t face the bills.

“You know, I was offered a scholarship at the time to continue school but my parents didn’t think it was necessary and I guess that was very much the way things were back then,” she said.

“I got a job as a receptionist for a year, then temped all over the city for an employment agency and was a very fast typist. I worked three jobs to earn the fare to go overseas and was away from 19-24.”

She met her husband of 45 years, Colin, while making sandwiches in the skifields at Mt Bulla and they have lived happily ever since.

“He still makes me laugh,” she said. “It was his vision to farm pheasants.”

The product line has grown from a single batch of Pheasant Farm pate sold for a song in 1979 into about 200 items, including preserves, vinegars, olive oil, sauces, dried fruits, ice-cream, biscuits and teas.

All but five are made in the Barossa, which resulted in the ACCC taking action last year over the slogan “Barossa Food Tradition” on labels.

“Someone took objection because it could be misleading,” she said. “That’s the last thing I ever wanted and I couldn’t bear to think that anyone thought I was trying to mislead, so I took the reference off entirely (from the whole product line) rather than having two different labels on the market.”

When asked what it’s like being a woman in the Australian food industry at the moment. She says that “without doubt” there are as many important women as there are important men, but it remains a male-dominated industry.

“There are really strong women who have contributed so much, and there are so many coming through the ranks. It’s a very hard road once a female has a family, it is a very hard industry. But by gosh, women in the kitchen have got such a place and so often it’s those passionate women who rise to the top.”

“That’s the key; there must be substance that sits behind what appears idyllic.”

– Maggie Beer