

SHAW THING

Known for her impeccable sense of style, Claudia Shaw's elegant approach to fashion is reflected in the way she cooks. She talks to *Crave* about her cookbooks and her culinary passion.

Text by P. Ramakrishnan



With her toned legs and elegant frame, her distinguished lineage – she is the grandniece of media mogul Sir Run Run Shaw – and her association with luxury brands, Claudia Shaw's credentials as a socialite and fashionista are impeccable.

Her appearances in the social pages of magazines are so frequent one wonders if she could ever have time to do anything other than glide beautifully into Hong Kong's most glamorous functions.

But with the publication of *Delicious* and then *Too Delicious*, two wonderfully instructive cookbooks written by Shaw with her friend Dominica Yang, she has revealed another facet to her existence – a passionate love affair with good food.

The books were publicised by word of mouth with all proceeds going to charity. They have been a roaring success in shops across the city.

And listening to Shaw waxing lyrical about cooking, it is not hard to understand why.

"I have dishes coming out of my ear. I can't tell you about how much I love good food," she says.

This love, it transpired, was shared by her friend Dominica Yang and the idea for the book came about over lunch when the pair discovered, through their backgrounds, that they had hundreds of recipes up their sleeves. And the magic was in their simplicity.

"Dominica and I were chatting about how much we both loved cooking and we said,

we'd love to put out a cookbook, why don't we just do it," she says.

"It's basically all the stuff that we would make at home, recipes from friends, parents, grandparents – we don't even know where they all originated from, but in every page, we have dishes that we always make at home.

"Everything is tried and tested by us. For years these have lived with us in our homes and basically it's food from around the world, Western and Asian, that's what we eat."

As you find with most culinary fanatics, the seeds of Shaw's obsession with good food were sown in her childhood.

"Both my grandparents were great cooks, my mother is a wonderful cook. My father's side is a family of foodies as well, and my brother is a great cook. We talk about food, we discuss meals, we get together on weekends over food – it means a lot.

"Coming home as a child has a lot of food memories for me. We had a Chinese cook who would always ask: 'What would you like?' when we got home. A cookie, or wonton, or any local dish of choice."

These memories and sheer determination to bring the book out helped Shaw and Yang overcome their lack of knowledge about the publishing industry to make a success of the idea.

And, for anyone unfamiliar with them, they are gorgeous to look at, filled

with delectable images.

"Every photo in the book was shot in two days, all 60 dishes," she recalls. "It was a like a factory, all those dishes were made, shot and then they went off to everyone we knew – the photographers, the photographer's girlfriend, anyone who walked in."

With so many recipes to cook at home it might seem surprising that Shaw ever eats out but she, like most of us, has her views about Hong Kong's restaurants.

"It's sad that Hong Kong doesn't have enough quirky places where you can get really good food in a lovely venue that's not in a hotel atmosphere," she says.

"I'm not a big fan of Soho or Lan Kwai Fong. Nor are my friends. Jimmy's Kitchen is nice and so are the usual upmarket places like Caprice and Robuchon. For good food, there's also Kee Club and Crystal Jade.

"Rent here is so high and there are some great cooks out there who would like to open up a place, but they can't make it because of the criminal overheads. Once you've sorted rent out, how can you possibly make a profit?"

It's unlikely these challenging circumstances for budding Hong Kong restaurateurs will change in the short term. In the meantime, the homecooking revolution continues to gather pace – thanks in no small measure to books like Shaw's two cookbooks. ■