

# Shampoo with soda

I DON'T think that there is anyone I know who has not enjoyed a lunch, afternoon or dinner at Langans, and I doubt that many have escaped without fond memories.

On arrival at Richard's office, I said good morning to the three-row-deep sea of teddy bears (who ignored me) and to Richard (who didn't), who was looking as fresh as the day I first met him. Well – almost.

As I waited for him, I mused over when I was first in London in the late 70s, an ingenue fresh from finishing school. I went out for lunch one day with some friends to Langans. There I met Richard Shepherd for the first time and still, to this day, I cannot remember what time I left, but I know the afternoon was great fun for all of us!

So how and where did it all begin? It was in 1977, when Richard joined Langans Brasserie as chef de cuisine and partner with Peter Langan and Michael Caine.

"A lot of chefs don't get into the wine side, but there was no chance of escape with Peter Langan and Joseph Berkman around. I am not what you would call a trained connoisseur of wines. I believe the way to learn about different wines is to drink them!

"I have been lucky to drink some really great wines, the most memorable of all being Petrus 66. Thankfully Joseph paid for it, because I certainly couldn't have afforded it! I have drunk many other good chateaux out of my price range but that obviously didn't stop me enjoying them!"

What keeps you going after all this time with so many successful restaurants? Don't you ever have frivolous urges?

"My upbringing moulded me into the type of person who has to keep going to prove yourself all the time. But I don't really see myself as being successful, just doing a job to the best of my ability. As for splashing out on my wish list, I came to a decision 10 years ago that at the end of the day I can only wear one suit, drive one car, and eat one meal – I don't like wasting

**DEBBY COLLINSON**  
hears about high jinks and  
good wine from legendary  
Taverners supporter  
Richard Shepherd

Richard Shepherd, left, John Bromley and Craig Pearman sample the in-flight wine on the way to a Lions tour in South Africa



money but that doesn't mean I don't enjoy myself - a lot!"

Do you have any regrets?

"Only one. I wanted to achieve more and have a better lifestyle than my parents. Unfortunately, as a result, I do regret not having seen enough of my kids as they grew up. I spent too much time at work but then sometimes life is full of sacrifices."

So any mishaps in the restaurant you want to tell us about?

"Well, there was one funny instance at a late-lunch table with a group of people telling a story. One of the gentlemen gesticulated wildly with his hands and knocked a glass of Chateau Margaux all over a very elegant lady who was wearing a fabulous, and no doubt wildly expensive, white silk blouse.

"I courageously leapt up and dashed

over to the bar where there was a soda siphon. I grabbed it and heroically sprayed her with a steady stream but my aim was not too clever and I proceeded to give her hair a complete and thorough wash.

"She was very kind and dignified – she looked at me like a naughty little schoolboy and said in the tones of Lady Bracknell: 'I will leave now to go and change!'

"If I was marooned on an island, I would need to have an eternal supply of Gauloises and plenty of scotch and red wine. Naturally I would have a stove to cook

"I don't know about luxuries, but a set of golf clubs would be essential. As golf is my biggest handicap, I would have lots of time to improve it, and I could even design my own golf course...

"I would have like to have Brommers with me on my island, so we could continue our silly antics, the most unforgettable of which were in South Africa.

"Once, we closed three bars when out there watching the cricket. Brommers, also a scotch drinker, and I were debating the merits of whether you should you serve

single or double measures of scotch.

"Naturally, I only serve doubles. Brommers believed you should have the right to receive small measures, especially if you are driving. I tried to acquaint him with the fact that if you are driving you shouldn't be drinking at all! By the time you have had 12 scotches it doesn't really matter whether they are singles or doubles! I cannot remember the outcome but do remember us being asked to leave three different bars."

Thank you, Richard, for your time. But, before we leave you, I have a little surprise. I contacted with the lady who was doused with Chateau Margaux and asked if she remembered the event you recalled.

"Remember it? Not only do I remember it, I now will not wash my hair in anything else!" ■