

[Music]

Female: I just always remember running up to the windows, pressing my nose against the glass and watching the planes come in.

Male: My mum, she's a very loving natured person so you know when she's serious it means something.

Male: Wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself.

Female: That's pretty much when my whole life changed.

[Music]

Female: What we do day-to-day for each of us is our own contribution to the world, regardless of your occupation. But can each of us find something that we are truly passionate about, that we can be proud of, and that can make us excited to get up every Monday morning? In this series we chat to people who are out there doing just that, doing what they describe as exactly what they love to do.

[Music]

Matt: I did have to make some sacrifices. So some nights I couldn't necessarily be there for my children so that meant that they would need to look after themselves as well and that brought on a different level of trust for us as well.

Female: Matt is warm, fun, a self confessed foodie, and a father of two. Matt has notched up an interesting list of careers, from a musician in the Australian Navy to media and marketing for the Federal Government. We talked to Matt about inspiration, sacrifice and flipping burgers down the Coast.

Matt: My name is Matt Morrissey and I'm a head chef. I'm a father of two, I've got two beautiful teenage children. I've got a daughter who is almost 19 and a son who's 15.

Female: Thanks so much for taking the time to talk to us today Matt. I wanted to jump straight into it. You've had a number of careers in your lifetime, can you talk us through them?

Matt: Fifteen or 20 years ago I was a lot different. I was a young sailor. I was a musician within the Royal Australian Navy, travelling around the countryside playing music which was fantastic. So whilst I would have been outgoing and somewhat fun to be around, I guess I have found a sense of maturity since those wild and wonderful days.

Female: I don't doubt that you've had a great time. So you obviously left the Navy at some point?

Matt: Yeah so the Navy was fantastic. So but as I say, I was a musician. So I got to a stage in my career that I needed to know if I could do anything else other than play music. So I actually took on a marketing role within Defence and I was at Defence Force Recruiting Headquarters for about 12 months. I had a 12 month posting before I left the Defence Force. And then I fell into various roles within the Australian public service. So I had a great career as a public servant in both customs and the Australian Federal Police and here locally within the A.C.T. government in a number of media and marketing roles.

Female: So you've not just had other careers but you've had successful ones and now you're a head chef. What led you to become a chef?

Matt: I had a great career in the public service but for me, I couldn't see myself sitting behind a desk all the way through to retirement age. So I'd made a decision to try and do something that was actually going to make me happy. I had that real moment of wanting to be happy doing something that I was going to enjoy. So I turned a corner when I hit 40 and I said to my children that I needed to do something that was going to make me happy. I said to them that I really needed to try and become a chef and see if I could take my skills in the kitchen at home and transfer them to those of a chef in a commercial environment. So that's when I decided to take on an apprenticeship.

So the decision to actually go and become a chef actually – whilst it provided challenge, it also alleviated some stresses I guess for want of a better term. I wasn't enjoying my work as a public servant, I had a great job but I just wasn't finding that that was exactly what it was that I wanted to do. I couldn't see myself doing that until I was 65 or potentially 70 years of age. So I made the decision to actually go and be a chef so that I could actually do something, even when I get to that retirement age. I might find myself down the Coast or in the countryside somewhere flipping burgers at a bar and that's going to make me incredibly happy.

Female: So that was obviously a huge decision and we'll come back to it. But I'm more interested in the fact, you're obviously someone who is able to wear different hats and take whatever situation you're in and make a really good go of it. You started out as a musician and ended up in marketing. Was cheffing even on the radar for you when you were younger?

Matt: So my journey to get where I am now has been quite a lengthy one. Being a chef has been something that I've wanted to do for quite some time. I've always enjoyed cooking. Ever since my days at high school I used to love home economics and doing all the cooking classes and whatever at school. I've always been around food. My mum was a fantastic cook, just at home, and whenever I used to get home from school there would always be

something special for us to eat as kids. You'd have your friends around, there'd always be something there for us. So I guess that love of food has always been there.

Female: So back to the decision making process, with the factors involved such as raising teenage children, it was obviously something you needed to think deeply about.

Matt: When I sat down, and for the first time sat down and really had a look at what it would mean to give all of us this up, to give up a fairly good salary and to swap it out for what was going to be an apprentice's wage, that was one of the biggest challenges that I had to make. But I knew that in order to be happy doing what I was going to do and to become a chef, that that was actually one of the biggest sacrifices that I would have to make. So I sat down, did all the figures, did all the sums, and just did what it took to make things happen. I managed to finish my apprenticeship in 22 months. So I had combined the last two years. So I combined my second and third year of studying, rolled it all into one and just tried to do nothing else but consume myself with food, with learning, commitment to study in order to try and finish my apprenticeship as quickly as I could so that I could go and be a qualified chef within the industry itself.

Female: It's interesting that you mentioned sacrifice. When we're talking about people who already have a career, possibly earning a really good salary, maybe in a management position, and they're settled into their life, making the decision to go back and study is really bold. How did that sense of sacrifice play out for you and were you surprised at all by any of it?

Matt: On the main, no. I would say no surprises. I went into it with a very clear mindset knowing that I was going to have to scrub floors, knowing that I was going to have to do dishes, that I was just going to have to peel potatoes, peel carrots, and I was open to all of that. And I guess that's probably been one of the most interesting points of conversation when I talk to people my own age about going and doing an apprenticeship. And really, you have to be open to that. You have to realise that you are going in to an industry where you are going back to the bottom and you are going to work and struggle and do whatever it takes, if that's what you want, to get to the top. In order to try and finish the apprenticeship as quickly as I could, I did have to make some sacrifices.

So some nights I couldn't necessarily be there for my children so that meant that they would need to look after themselves as well and that brought on a different level of trust for us as well. So knowing that they would be able to look after themselves when I had to work a couple of nights a week was very

important. I missed one or two school concerts unfortunately but since then I've been very lucky to have a very good relationship with my children. They knew what it would mean for me to undertake this study and to do what I want to do. And I hope in some ways that I've been able to show them in many ways too that if you want to go for something and work for something hard enough, that you're going to be prepared to do whatever it takes in order to reach that goal.

Female: Do you think seeing you work so hard for something has been inspiring for your kids?

Matt: I'd like to think so. It is hard. When you talk about education these days everyone is focused very much so on going to university but it's not necessarily the only option that's available for so many kids these days. The world thrives and needs tradesmen of – tradesmen and tradeswomen of all categories. So for me, all I've ever said to my children is I want them to do what makes them happy. So for me, being a chef, cooking was always my passion, that's what drove me, and I hope in some ways that I can say to them if they've got a different passion, if they're working in one industry but they think they've got a passion in another then I will encourage them all the time to go and do what it is that actually makes them happy.

Female: I think that's really great advice. So speaking of inspiring others, what have you found has inspired you or pushed you along the way?

Matt: I guess when you have a look at the chefs and the superstars of chefs now that have come through that you see on shows like *Masterchef*, looking at all those people like George Calombaris, Gary Mehigan, looking at those guys that are actually judges on the shows, all of these people have gone through vocational education in order to be the successful people that they are today. I guess for me, I was fortunate throughout my apprenticeship. I actually won a scholarship through Canberra Institute of Technology to travel down to the Yarra Valley down in Victoria and I worked in a fine dining restaurant down there. And the food that they were putting out in this establishment was unbelievable, I was blown away. This winery is absolutely sensational. It's just set on pristine grounds.

My first day working in the kitchen, I was working along and there were helicopters flying around, I said, "Oh they're starting to get a bit close," and the chef said, "Yeah they're going to get a bit closer yet," and they actually land at the vineyard and people fly in for lunch and fly out. It's absolutely incredible. But to work with the ingredients that we were working with, I may never work with these ingredients again but just to play with them and the different combinations of flavours and to work with chefs that have been

trained by Marco Pierre White and have those sort of experiences, that was something that is going to hold a very special place in my heart.

Female: So we've talked about sacrifice, and I think I know the answer to this one already, but has it all been worth it?

Matt: So now that I have completed my studies and I am working in the industry, it is absolutely brilliant. It is everything that I ever wanted it to be. And now, as head chef, I get to try and take that one step further and train my apprenticeships. So I'm really looking for that passion for people. So getting to play with food for me on a daily basis is absolutely incredible. So knowing that you're actually putting your heart and soul into what goes onto someone's plate, seeing someone take a photo, put a snap up of their food, whatever it is, all of that stuff that goes with food these days and it's absolutely wonderful. I couldn't ask for anything more.

Female: Thank you so much for sharing your story Matt, we really appreciate it. We have no doubt your children are incredibly proud of you and we look forward to seeing what comes next.

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Female: Each person that we speak to in this podcast series is a graduate, the graduate of vocational education and training. This podcast is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training. For more information on vocational education and training please visit www.myskills.gov.au.

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