

Q&A  
*Sid Shanti*  
Private chef & author

Meet the charismatic island chef and former DJ who introduced the island's culinary traditions to the world via his unique book *Glorious Ibiza Food (& Music)*.



ne of Ibiza' most lovable, charismatic characters and most talented private chefs, Sid Shanti was always destined for a life revolving around food. After all, his earliest food-related memory involves cooking a full English breakfast in his classroom for show and tell at age 10! But unlike other 'celebrity' chefs who make names for themselves before arriving in Ibiza, Sid's culinary career was a little more topsy-turvy. It was through his second love – music – that he was introduced to the white isle, being booked to play a DJ set at the world's biggest ever club night, Manumission.

This chance encounter with the island and its people ultimately changed the course of Sid's life (he wouldn't have had it any other way) as he got out from behind the decks and back into the kitchen, going on to cook for some of the world's most famous entertainers, foodies and chefs alike. Most recently, his book Food Glorious Ibiza Food (& Music) became Ibiza's best selling lifestyle cookbook – a glimpse into the island's culinary heritage, traditions and natural ingredients plus a collection of recipes and playlists to dine to.

## WHO (OR WHAT) WAS YOUR EARLIEST CULINARY INFLUENCE?

My mother. She was and still is a great cook. When we moved from London to the country we grew all our own vegetables and kept chickens. I remember long summer and autumn days spent shucking broad beans, blanching and then freezing them, picking fruit and then making jams and preserves. These stocks for the pantry would last us through the winter. I absolutely love fresh young broad beans now but if you had asked me back then... Errrgh!

I also worked on a farm five nights a week after school for three hours an evening in my teens, picking potatoes, onions, driving tractors and 'bushbeating' pheasant shoots on weekends during the season. All this must have contributed to my passion for food.

## HOW DID YOU BECOME A CHEF?

I took a job as a caterer to help fund my expenses while I was at college. I was general dogs body, washing up, sleeping in marquees overnight to watch the stock didn't get stolen... that sort of thing. They offered me a full time job and I knew business studies didn't grab my heart so my passion for food directed me. That was the start of my career. I remember being a commis chef on the Royal Boxes at Headingley Cricket Ground cooking for the Queen with this company after spending many months washing dirty pots and pans.

## TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT YOUR CAREER PATH.

After couple of years catering in Leeds, I went back to London to work in the big hotels to gain experience as a chef. I settled in at The Groucho Club as an apprentice, and went back to college, this time to study catering, and finished my studies to be a professional chef. During this time, working



long hours and with a need to unwind, I discovered the rave scene! This was the late 80s, early 90s in London.

### WHEN YOU VEERED OFF-COURSE AND BECAME KNOWN AS A DJ...

I was very passionate about music and started using all my cash and spare time scouring record shops around London. Nights off would be spent with my 1210s and learning to mix, sending mix tapes off to promoters and playing low-key free parties around the city. I went to Goa in 1990 and from then on every year and myself and a few friends exported the very unique themed Goa parties back to the city. My break came when an active promoter heard me play in a spiral tribe squat party in a disused vicarage behind Capital Radio. He offered me my first paid gig at a rave in the countryside. My set went down very well and from there I gained a lot of support. This took my career path away from long-hours and low pay in

kitchens, to an international DJ career playing in major cities around the world. At this time I was also resident in prominent clubs in London as well as holding my own monthly parties at the Brixton Fridge.

### SO WAS IT DJING THAT LED YOU TO IBIZA?

I was brought to Ibiza as a professional DJ in 1998 by Mike and Claire to play at Manumission. I had never been before and knew very little about the place. I was met at the airport by [famed Manumission dwarf] Johnny Golden in a vintage American army pick up truck and taken for lunch at Sa Trinxia. I fell in love with the island immediately.

### WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE LIKE AT MANUMISSION?

Well, the Manumission Motel was an extremely hedonistic place. I'd come from a three-month trip in central America, playing in Columbian mafia





discos, beach parties in Panama and a wild total solar eclipse of the sun rave on a peninsula jutting out from Venezuela into the Caribbean ocean. At the time I didn't think it could get any more crazy, until I was given my room for two weeks at the Motel!

#### **WHAT ENTICED YOU BACK TO LIFE AS A CHEF?**

I was lured back into the kitchen after setting up the Manumission restaurant, Shanti Town, on the roof of the Motel in Ibiza!

#### **THAT MUST HAVE BEEN A CHALLENGE!**

There was no food, taxis or phones in the Motel and so one night I set about cooking dinner for everyone. I bought the ingredients and set to work in the kitchen. The meal impressed Mike and Claire and so we discussed setting up a restaurant on the roof. We searched skips for materials, used pallets to build bars, tables and chairs. I found some cheap fridges that I had to crane up to the roof as they wouldn't go up the stairs! And we used an old bath and a wire bed mattress to make the BBQ, which was enough grill space to feed literally many hundreds of people on the Monday nights before the party at Privilege.

We ended up giving the food away for free, as we couldn't gain a license to sell it, and so it became the place to be to get fed before the long session that was Manumission, Manumission Carry On at Space, and the finish at Bora Bora.

#### **OK... SO WHAT CAME NEXT?**

I set up the Manumission diner in the port of Ibiza with Mike and Claire, then I went on to open a restaurant called El Faraon. At that point, around 2004, I'd given up DJing professionally and was solely focused on food and hospitality. El Faraon was the first gastro pub style venue on

the island, we served a mixed bistro menu and started a very successful Sunday lunch program with entertainment and DJs, regularly serving 150 covers for lunch and often doing free parties for fun. When my partners pulled out in 2004 I decided to sell my share and that's when I started focusing on the private sector.

**YOUR FREE PARTIES HAVE BECOME A THING OF IBIZA LEGEND...**

Oh thank you! I'm as passionate about having fun as I am about food! I love to throw free parties. That's what I've always done and continue to endeavour to do.

**TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE BEST ONES.**

We threw some great parties in 2007 with UK promoters Mulletover. One of the best was at the lighthouse in Portinatx, although sadly the police



shut it down before the finish. My new year's day party at Sa Tasca in 2012 on the San Augustin road was a blast and every year in the middle of October I throw the Shantico 'Autumn in Ibiza - Aii' party at Boutique Hostal Salinas. That is always well-attended by like-minded thrill seekers, which is what makes a great party.

**WHAT'S YOUR WORK LIFE LIKE NOW IN IBIZA?**

I would imagine like most other residents who work here, extremely busy in the summer months and a little more relaxed off-season. My work in summer is more hands on and relentless whereas I can afford to step back slightly during winter and focus on things like books!





### **HOW DID THE BOOK GLORIOUS IBIZA FOOD (& MUSIC) COME ABOUT?**

It was an idea I had while cooking, just really to put down things I had learnt about the island and what it had to offer. I'd never written a book or for that matter published one, but with a great team around me I managed to pull it off.

### **DID YOU EVER FEEL LIKE YOU SHOULD BE KEEPING THE ISLAND'S SECRETS? OR FIERCELY GUARDING YOUR RECIPES?**

Why keep secrets? It's better to share and learn, and in any case I figured it would make a great read. Many chefs coming to the island for the first time comment on how the book has helped them, and that's very rewarding, much more so than keeping all my secrets close to my chest!

### **HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT GETTING TO KNOW THE LOCAL TRADITIONS, RECIPES, CUSTOMS AND PRODUCE?**

When I cooked for Jamie Oliver I had contacted a few of the people and organisations (that feature in the book) with a view to showing him local traditions. They were all more than happy to do this as they are very proud. As far as the wild ingredients section, it was just a matter of photographing the wild plants I had picked and foraged for many years on Ibiza.

### **SO YOU DO ACTUALLY PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH!**

Yes, when there's something out there I want! In the autumn, winter and spring - when there is an abundance of both produce and time - I love to pick wild asparagus, rocket and other things from the campo.





### **WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IS THE 'MUST-TRY' RECIPE FROM THE BOOK?**

Definitely the marinated entraña 'skirt' steak. It wins every single time!

### **WHAT HAS THE RESPONSE BEEN LIKE FROM READERS?**

I couldn't have dreamed of a better, more positive response. I'm thrilled at the different people who all find something exciting in the book. From locals proud of the exposure of the positive sides of Ibiza, to expats who are happy to know the best providers, tourists who love it for a memory of the island and music lovers who find the exclusive playlists for mealtimes extremely unique.

### **WHO ARE YOUR CLIENTELE?**

I have a varied clientele, some famous, some not so famous, some extremely accomplished and some just regular people who love good food. Over the years I've had the pleasure of not only meeting and cooking for some very interesting people and through this experience, I'm now lucky enough to call them my friends.

### **WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE LIKE AS YOUR OWN BOSS, CREATING YOUR OWN MENUS AND EVENTS?**

It's obviously a real pleasure to be able to create dishes and buy produce for people who are passionate about food and give me free rein on what I would like to serve. All my menus are







created for each client individually - there are signature dishes and plates I create again and again but I don't have a list of menus. Each time a client requests my services I consult first and then propose what we can do, always driven by my passion and flair for what I love and the ingredients I like to use.

**WOULD YOU EVER ENTERTAIN THE IDEA OF TAKING ON A RESTAURANT AGAIN?**

I'd never rule it out, but at the moment I'm focusing more on the private side and developing products using island ingredients. I have a second book in the pipeline, a collection of recipes from well-known Ibiza and international artists. Hopefully this will be ready for release in spring 2016 and will be accompanied by which an interactive e-book, so time is limited at this stage in my career.

**WHAT ABOUT DJING - IS IT SOMETHING YOU STILL DO?**

I do get asked to. More than ever as there is a resurgence in 'retro' gigs. 20 years or so has passed since I was playing and so young kids are now listening to 'old' music! I played professionally in Greece in March and I have a gig coming up in Copenhagen but generally I shy away from requests unless I want a holiday! I enjoy playing at my own parties though, as I have free rein on the sound I'd like to spin. So I will be playing alongside some very good DJs at my next Shantico party at BHS on October 17.

**DESCRIBE YOUR FOOD PHILOSOPHY?**

Eat for pleasure and health and respect the origin of all ingredients.



## WHO OR WHAT ARE YOUR CULINARY INSPIRATIONS TODAY?

Fine oils and vinegars, organically reared livestock and vegetables from the red Ibiza soil. Imported fresh herbs from all corners of the world, wild fish from the Balearic waters, clams from Galicia, raw cuts of black Iberian acorn fed pork from Jabugo and chili that can make you sneeze just by smelling it.

## DO YOU STILL COOK AT HOME FOR YOURSELF?

I cook all the time and prefer to eat in than out generally, in saying that I do enjoy travelling and eating out too. Inviting friends over for a big lunch or paella in winter in Ibiza never gets boring!

## WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE IBIZA CUSTOMS?

Hunting wild rabbit with Podenco dogs in order to catch one for the pot! It may sound barbaric but actually it's a very graceful cultural experience.

## WHAT ABOUT LOCAL RESTAURANTS? WHERE WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

I like local restaurants serving simple food. The grilled squid, triple fried Ibiza potatoes and seasonal local salad at Es Canto in Santa Gertrudis is a firm favourite.

## HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THE ISLAND'S CULINARY SCENE EVOLVE OVER TIME?

The beach scene has expanded very rapidly as has the nighttime dining experience and there are some very good offerings out there, though possibly overpriced. The local offerings have gladly remained static and this I think is a good thing in order to keep the balance of the island we all love.

## WHAT KEEPS YOU COOKING, WORKING AND LIVING HERE IN IBIZA?

I love the place! The people, the weather, the tolerance of the locals, the intense cosmopolitan vibes in the summer months and the village-like peace of the winter. The sea, the beaches, the stars, the moon. The sister island of Formentera. Sunsets and coloured skies. The local markets of fish, meat and vegetables. But most of all, because the island is filled with like-minded souls.

*Images shot on location at Ca'n Pere Mussona, Ibiza's only certified organic farm.*

*Glorious Ibiza Food (& Music) by Sid Shanti can be purchased online at [www.sidshanti.com](http://www.sidshanti.com)*

