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SPECIAL THANKS TO SARAH CANET



Good vision: Sophie Conran relaxes with a cup of Nespresso in the sitting room – with a view of the home office in the background – and looks to the future.

GREAT MOMENT



Open living: The youngest member of the Conran family, the Nespresso machine, sitting pretty in the kitchen where her delicious pies are developed.

CHEER-LEADER OF STYLE

A quintessential feeling of Tuscany springs to mind, but not necessarily London... Mouth-watering smells waft down towards us as a smiling face greets us at the top of a Victorian townhouse staircase and welcomes us into her London home. Sophie Conran smiles a lot and not just when you first meet the vivacious gourmet food entrepreneur.

Savour a relaxed moment with the new queen of style-food and daughter of design icon Sir Terence Conran with her beloved cup of Nespresso.



Congratulations! Sophie Conran has been awarded a Gold Medal in the Great Taste Awards 2005, the UK's "Food Oscars", for her Chicken & Preserved Lemon Pie.

Then again, she has plenty to smile about: For starters, there are those style savvy genes of her father Sir Terence Conran, Britain's Style Guru with his own shops. Now there's also the success of her new luxury pie collection. The established expectations of what a good pie should be are indeed fulfilled in her pies but at the same time thrown overboard: Utterly surprising elements of the unexpected "exotic" explode on the taste buds. Her fish pie is a very tasty salmon indeed, mixed with North African spices and the distinctive flavour of fennel, topped with a perfectly fluffy and creamy mash infused with saffron. Conran's Chicken pie comes with these unduly trivial words attached only to throw off that boring trench coat to reveal a kind of sexy outfit underneath of yes, chicken but also olives, preserved lemon and a cumin puff pastry!

Sophie Conran's gourmet idea was born out of necessity, so to speak – back when she was still working full time for her brother Jasper and needed to feed her two children, Felix and Coco (10 and 8 years old). She was looking around for nice things for them to eat and found that there wasn't really anything out there that would fit the bill. She then thought, "Pies! They're a beautiful thing, you can put anything in them!"

Luxury pies seem to fit in beautifully with the natural evolution of her biography, seeing as they marry the interests of her entire family: design and food come together in her luxury pies. The launch of her gourmet pie company followed at the end of last year from her home office, which, incidentally, is

in full view across from the open farmhouse style kitchen, replete with a cosy, fully functional and countryside-tested Aga cooker, where lunch is served. As every parent knows, working from home is no small feat and only occasionally a laughing matter, but with a very believable air of confidence Sophie Conran claims: "I love it! It means I can work until 2 O'clock in the morning! It doesn't happen that often, but, you know, when I get into something, I get really excited about it." Her natural ease and thoroughly warm hostess-manner could make anyone easily forget that she is actually part of a pretty important British design-dynasty. Sophie Conran manages to fit easily into the shoes, growing up as she did in this extraordinarily entrepreneurial family. Her father founded the Conran Shop on London's Fulham Road in 1973 (a traditional and contemporary design store which now has 10 locations in London, Paris, New York, Tokyo and Fukuoka) as well as establishing the affordable design chain Habitat in 1964 which now boasts over 74 stores world-wide; her mother Caroline is a renowned food writer and cook.

It must be difficult to carve out one's own unique identity being surrounded by so many near iconic personalities, but not for Terence Conran's eldest daughter: "What I'm doing is what I'm doing because I thought I should do it – and not because I thought: 'I must carve out my own area and be a Conran!'" Sounds pretty good! Is there still something unique that she would like to go down in history for? "For improving people's lives! If I'm remembered at all, that is!", she says laughingly before adding: "I'd like to change

people's perception of what convenience food is and the quality connected to that." Sophie Conran certainly did and embarked on the mission to make the best pies. She went and saw lots and lots of people who were cooking until she found a very small catering company in South London. It was the people who decided it for her first – really nice people who shared her ethos of wanting to put good home-cooked food on the table and to be able to produce that. It's down to the ingredients she found: the best pastry available, which is organic and took months to find, as well as surprising and creative mixtures of all fresh ingredients. She knows the farmer where the beef comes from; she also knows that everything is additive-, preservative- and GM-free. Conran sums it up rather well by saying: "All very sound stuff, really"

Using the highest quality ingredients in the most sophisticated and advanced way to fulfil one's passion for good taste applies to both Nespresso's philosophy of coffee and Sophie Conran's ethos behind everything she does, including enjoying a good cup of coffee. She has a cup for breakfast every morning – with three quarters hot milk sweetened with honey – followed by another cup around 6 in the evening, her self-proclaimed low point. "Given the choice I would always go for a Nespresso. We used to have this amazing house in France where we always bought loads of capsules down with us...!"

A marriage of convenience and highest quality is pure luxury – something both Nespresso and all the Conran clan share. Including the smiling Sophie.

Close quarters: The home office adjoining the living area and open kitchen is speckled with shades of red and is as stylish as it is practical.

