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SOUL SEARCHER

Roger Mooking explains how food, music and travel spice up his life
BY ANDREA ERCOLANI



FOR ROGER MOOKING, host of Food Network Canada's *Everyday Exotic*, co-host of *Heat Seekers* and a successful recording artist, food and music have always been intertwined. As his motto goes: "One feeds the body, the other the soul—it is all food in all its various forms." Mooking's body and soul were both nourished growing up in Trinidad with his family. "My dad used to collect a lot of records and my brother was a DJ, so there was always a lot of music playing in the house. There was that and cooking—I've wanted to be a chef since I was three years old."

Born into a family of restaurant owners, Mooking got involved in that business himself when they moved to Edmonton and he began working in restaurants, using the money he made to book recording time at

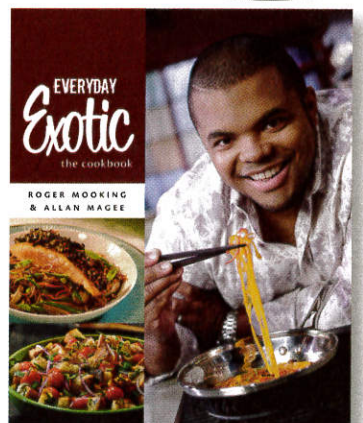
a music studio. "I always followed both passions like that—you have to." He then attended culinary school in Toronto and opened two successful restaurants of his own.

Today, after selling the restaurants—"There's just not enough time in the day!"—his focus is on his two hit shows and a new cookbook, *Everyday Exotic: The Cookbook*, all of which take him around the world and home again faster than you can say jalapeno. Mooking figures that for the next six months, he'll be travelling about 20 days a month. "To be honest," he says with a chuckle, "I really dislike travelling in planes." So how does he cope? "I take Graviol, go to sleep and listen to my music the whole time. Then when I wake up, I'm that much closer."

Over the years, his favourite destinations have been the ones where he has learned the most. "I always look at travelling as an opportunity to learn something new," he says. "Food is such a vessel for culture, so when I'm in a different place I definitely check the food culture out." Among his favourites are culture-rich Malaysia, Singapore, New Orleans and San Francisco. He's drawn to the energy and culinary scenes in these cities, often putting the guidebooks down and talking to locals about where to eat. "There is so much information out there, it's almost over-information. I've given all that up and I just talk to people."

Mooking's travel bucket list is quickly being checked off, save for one trip he's always dreamed of: visiting the small village in China where his grandfather was born. "My grandfather has passed away, but there's an old generation still there. I would love to do that. It would be so great." No doubt it's a place that would be good for the soul.

HOME BASE



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