



The dish

by Jane Rocca

A champion space to let off steam

Swimming champ Ariarne Titmus shares her favourite eating and drinking spots overseas and around Australia, plus how she unwinds in her own kitchen.

Australian swimming champion Ariarne Titmus has a close eye on the Paris Olympics next year, but for now, she's revelling in her success at the World Swimming Championships in Fukuoka, where she broke the world record to claim gold in the women's 400 metres freestyle.

When Titmus is not swimming and training 35 hours a week, she likes to switch off in the kitchen, cooking meals for parents Steve and Robyn and sister Mia, who she lives with in Brisbane. She's big on slow-cooked lamb shoulder, roasts with an abundance of vegies, and is renowned for her Christmas pavlova.

"I would love to go to Paris and defend my titles in the 200- and 400-metre freestyle," Titmus says. "I am really focused on training right now, but I do love to disconnect from my busy training schedule to cook in the kitchen. It's an off-switch for me and I find it very de-stressing."

Diagnosed with a gluten intolerance in 2017 after a brush with a parasite wrought havoc with her gut, the now 22-year-old spent years trying to rectify the bloating and cramping that often came with eating. She consulted a dietitian and also worked her way through the FODMAP list of do's and don'ts to nail down other non-gluten dietary triggers.

These days she's found her tolerance threshold and knows her dietary limits – and more importantly, figured a way to travel through Europe with best friend Elly after last year's Commonwealth Games without it affecting her love of eating out.

Titmus is an ambassador for GluteGuard, an enzyme product that aims to reduce the symptoms of small amounts of accidental gluten ingestion. "I bought GluteGuard to take with me to Europe because I was worried that I would accidentally eat gluten," she says.

She also avoids garlic, prefers lactose-free food and has a weakness for sweets, but her strict training regime means she's abstains more than indulges.

EATING IN

What is your signature dish and your go-to at home?

I love cooking a large roast pork with vegies for my family. It's always a crowd-pleaser. I also love cooking desserts but don't get to do that too often. I will always cook lamb shanks in the pressure-cooker and make ragu with what's left over.



Clockwise from main: Ariarne Titmus uses the kitchen to unwind; Coda's tea-smoked eggplant; roast pork is a family favourite. Photos: Simon Schluter, William Meppem

I also make gluten-free pasta and cook my own bliss ball snacks. I usually create them with something in the cupboard – an almond meal base with dates, butter, coconut and protein powder.

When I want to be naughty, I make a good sticky date pudding with caramel sauce, but I can't have that too often. I try to eat and live a healthy lifestyle. Last Christmas, I made Mum's favourite dessert – a 12-egg pavlova.

My guilty pleasure

I must admit I am a huge sweet tooth. Chocolate is never safe when it's near. I also love making a mean platter with a variety of cheeses, meats and dips with gluten-free crackers.

Best kitchen wisdom I would cling to?

I learnt to cook with my maternal grandmother, Sandra, [from when] I was little. When I was four years old, we would make ciabatta and I loved getting into the dough-making. I am quite a messy cook, and she told me to clean as I go.

She also taught me to [back] yourself and your intuition in the kitchen. She would say, "You don't always have to follow recipe if you think you can make it a bit better."

I tend to follow my instinct and palate as it makes it more fun.

I also try to make traditional recipes with gluten-free substitutes to create the right consistency or texture.

EATING OUT

My favourite hometown restaurant and go-to dish

One of my favourite restaurants in Brisbane is **Stanley**. There are many dishes that contain gluten, but there are also lots of options that I can enjoy. Their S&P lobster and raw kingfish dishes are amazing. I also like to order the fried rice, and they make spicy beans with pork mince as a side, which I opt for as a main dish. Sometimes they make a crab curry, which I highly recommend. I am a big seafood fan – so ceviche and raw fish also rate highly on the menu.

My favourite hometown cafe and/or bar

My favourite cafe, **Nodo** in Brisbane, is completely gluten-free and you would never know it. Their house bread, treats and famous doughnuts are my weakness. There are now multiple Nodo cafes around Brisbane. They make a seeded sourdough, which I often buy for the week. It tastes better than normal sourdough. They also make milk buns and pumpkin loaf. At Easter, they make the best hot cross buns and you wouldn't know any of it is gluten-free. I have a weakness for their Ferrero Rocher doughnut – I will often text my sister, Mia, to pick up one when I am coming back to town.

What is your favourite place to eat in Australia?

An absolute favourite place to go is

Saffire resort in Freycinet, in my home state of Tasmania. I went there for a getaway after the Olympics in 2021 and stayed to soak up and reconnect with Tassie. If you enjoy great food and produce and taking in nature, it's a great place to go. When you dine, you take in views of the water and the mountains. Their sea urchin fritters are amazing. The resort is big on sustainability and fine dining, and they use ingredients from around Tasmania. There's great seafood variety compared to Brisbane and the crayfish is insanely good.

Where do you love to eat in Sydney?

The best restaurant I have eaten at in Sydney is **Catalina** in Rose Bay. I loved their seared scallops and fresh seafood such as oysters. They also do a great steak. When there are high-quality protein options, I always go for them because there is no risk of cross-contamination with hidden gluten.

Where do you love to eat in Melbourne?

I love the food at **Maha Restaurant** – they even give you the spice they put on their lamb when you leave, which is delicious. I use it to make a lamb shoulder I slow-cooked for 12 hours, and it was great.

I have eaten at **Chin Chin** and **Coda** many times and I like that you don't have to search for gluten-free options on the menus – it's contemporary food with lots of

choices. You can always walk into any restaurant on **Flinders Lane** and not go wrong. My cousin lives in Richmond and we often eat at **Kekou** on Bridge Road. Last time I was there was in November 2022 during the Melbourne Cup carnival. I love eating as much sushi as I can when I'm there.

What's your favourite food city and why?

I love **Majorca** in Spain – tapas is great for sharing and you can often select items that don't have gluten in them.

What are your favourite places to eat there and why?

El Camino in Palma, Majorca, is unbelievable. It was recommended by a close friend and has the most amazing food. Traditional Spanish hits the spot for me. A half-hour drive away from the capital is another restaurant on a cliff top called **Sa Foradada**. It's a family-run restaurant and we walked 45 minutes down the cliff to get there. You dine overlooking the water and the scenery is something else. We had paella, and you see them cook it over the open fire. I dined there after the Commonwealth Games last year. I was on a European trip with my best friend, Elly, for a month – we had planned to do it after the Olympics in 2020, but COVID happened and we moved the date.

A hidden gem in Rome is Roscioli Salumeria con Cucina.

It's a deli that fronts a restaurant. I enjoyed the meats, cheeses and salads there. They also had house-made gluten-free pasta, which was amazing. I wouldn't have known it wasn't a wheat-based pasta.

I also dined in **Le Jules Verne** inside the Eiffel Tower with Elly. I made a reservation six months before we travelled to Paris. It was the most exciting eating experience I've ever had. If you appreciate fine dining, and the effort that goes into making minuscule things on a plate, then you'll love this. The beetroot ravioli is made of jelly and comes with a parmesan foam. I couldn't comprehend how they could keep the parmesan flavour in a foam shape that didn't disintegrate. It was like theatre. The lamb backstrap was also very tasty.

In Paris, we also dined at a traditional French restaurant – **La Fontaine de Mars**. I ate snails and loved them. They were served with a pesto chimichurri-type sauce over them. It didn't taste bad, it's the texture that can take you by surprise, though. I also enjoyed a steak tartare. I love this spot because it's tucked away and features all the classic French things – like the checkered tablecloths and diners crammed in.