

Donna Hay tries to whip them into shape...but the *MasterChef* boys are like her 'naughty brothers'

GRAZIA
EXCLUSIVE

'IT'S LIKE WORKING IN A KINDERGARTEN'

3 THEY scare the bejesus out of the contestants with their cutting comments and "go faster!" shouting, but according to food guru Donna Hay, the *MasterChef* judges are more like silly schoolboys than feared teachers.

The cookbook queen, who's a guest judge on the show, told *Grazia* that Matt Preston and George Calombaris use the downtime while the terrified competitors are cooking to amuse themselves at her expense.

"The boys are colourful and there are some pretty big personalities," the only woman judge in the line-up tells us.

"Sometimes it's like working in a kindergarten because they're not very focused or very well-behaved, but that's all part of the fun.

"They like to try and play practical jokes on me – they're blokey kinds of guys, and I do feel outnumbered a lot of the time, but they're like naughty



WORDS: ERIN MILLER

GIRLS IN THE KITC





brothers – they give me a hard time but then they look after me as well.”

But the pressure is clearly on the judges as well as the contestants. If Donna sometimes looks awkward or nervous on the panel, there’s good reason – she says she feels “awful” about critiquing the professional chefs who go up against the contestants.

And there have also been negative comments online about her wearing high heels on the show. “Well, I’m not cooking and I actually wear heels in the office, so of course I’m going to wear them,” she says.

While she’s clearly more than able to look after herself when it comes to dealing with the boys, some of the women in the final seven are feeling the heat of public scrutiny.

Lawyer Claire Winton Burn has had to endure being branded a home wrecker over her relationship with a colleague, while Joanne Zalm (evicted last week) has been rocked

by bitchy Facebook comments and even death threats.

Does Donna think the women are being subjected to more vitriol?

“I thought that was terrible,” she says of the anti-Joanne comments.

“I was disappointed about the Facebooking. You don’t have to move in with her, you don’t have to be her best friend, just watch it, or don’t watch it.

“It does seem in this series that the girls have been up for scrutiny.”

But with Marion Grasby the clear front-runner and Claire close behind, they may be in the minority but they’re holding their own in the contest.

“I think Claire is great if she can hold her nerve,” says Donna.

“And I think *MasterChef* has made some girls a bit more confident about entering the industry.”

Its effect on the food business is certainly far reaching, with Coles recently reporting a massive spike

in sales of the ingredients featured on the popular show.

Donna says her website was also inundated following the challenge where contestants cooked her pavlova.

“The phenomenon of the show has just been amazing,” she says. “We had a thousand photographs of pavlovas emailed in to us, from little kids to grandpas.”

And as the number of contestants is whittled down to the final stages, she expects the standard of cooking to be raised even higher.

“Compared to series one, the standard is streets ahead. They are picking things up really quickly so it’s a hard call as some of them are coming home so strongly.”

But the contestants will need to prepare for more blood, sweat and tears – and Donna can only sympathise with them.

“It’s really long days, it’s like a marathon. They’re exhausted and away from their families,” she says.

“It can be very hard on them.” Yes, the heat’s on – we’re just glad we’re not in the kitchen!

HEN Will the next *MasterChef* be a woman?



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