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I JUST SEE MYSELF AS SOMEONE WHO STARTED SOME RESTAURANTS AND COOKING AND ENJOYS WHAT I DO. I WAKE UP EVERY MORNING LOVING WHAT I DO

He says having an ego or thinking you're better than your staff creates a problem, where they won't be able to come up and talk to you. "Happy staff are good staff so you've got to make your staff happy."

Mangan likes to give a little back. Four years ago Mangan co-founded the Appetite for Excellence awards to recognise and encourage young up-and-coming talent. It started with Young Chef of the Year, but since then Young Waiter and Young Restaurateur categories have been added. The awards are judged by a panel of Australia's best chefs and restaurateurs

Mangan is happy to talk endlessly about the cooking business, but he's not comfortable discussing his love life. He shares his Pyrmont home with his girlfriend, Belinda Achurch.

When asked about her, he says: "We like to keep that all pretty much separate."

But wedding bells and children may still be some way off, as he continues his globetrotting.

"Look, I'm sure one day I'll want to have kids and get married. When? Who knows." To get away from it all he and Achurch go to his house in New South Wales' Kangaroo Valley. Down time in the city usually means seeing a movie or going to a restaurant he'd like to go rather than a "good" one.

"I enjoy inviting people over for lunch or dinner, but that's rare because I don't get the time to do that so much."

Other than that he tries to get to the gym or have a hit of tennis.

He thinks the timing's right for his new Melbourne venture, which he says will be a truer reflection of him than any of his other restaurants.

"I like restaurants with energy and atmosphere and buzz, and I love to eat simple, casual food, and I think that's what we are trying to achieve there."

He promises simple casual food in comfortable surroundings. The Palace will have a restaurant, a beer garden and a bar with food.

"It's not going to be fancy, and it's not going to be overpriced. It's going to bring back the old-fashioned pub, but modernised," he says.

If he could choose his last meal, it would be steak, chips with bearnaise sauce and green beans, and a good bottle of red wine — and that'll be on the menu.

Look out Melbourne, Mangansville is almost here.

\* See Tuesday's extrafood for Luke Mangan's favourite summer salads

