

Engineer adds a dash of pepper to

MATT LLOYD FOR THE TIMES

The new American chief of Arcadis UK does not look far to relax after work. Deirdre Hipwell reports

Now I can cook lamb's brain, but before I married my wife I had never even eaten mushrooms," Mike Carroll says. "Fine cuisine was not a priority when I was growing up as one of eight children in an Irish Catholic family in Long Island, New York."

But nearly 40 years of marriage have clearly refined his culinary skills — and his palate. Today, the former US Air Force officer — who last week became chief executive of the British division of Arcadis — is preparing steak Diane, French potatoes and petits pois à la française. As he deftly splashes clarified butter into a large pan to fry enormous sirloin steaks, he says that he is often happiest after a day spent cooking an elaborate meal.

Not that the civil engineer plans to have much time for fixing such feasts in the coming months after relocating from America, where he was president of the infrastructure division at Ar-

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New Yorker Mike Carroll learnt his kitchen skills from his wife Cathy, who hails from three generations of chefs

cadis, to assume its top job in Britain.

The Euronext-listed global engineering and consultancy group specialises in infrastructure, water, environment and buildings and is ranked among the world's top ten management and engineering consultancies. It employs about 16,000 people who generate more than €2 billion (£1.8 billion) a year in revenues and clients include Exxon, Chevron, Total, BP and Shell, among others.

Mr Carroll, 58, wants to make sure that Arcadis serves these clients in every country in which they operate. Of course, this includes Britain, where the engineer, once charged with ensuring continuous power supply to Cheyenne Mountain — America's Cold War defence hub located 2,000ft underground in Colorado — is the first to admit that Arcadis has some hard work to do.

"Our objective is to become one of the top players in the UK, and we are going to do this by reorganising around growth and profit, which has not been that good in the UK for the last few

Q&A

Best restaurant in London?

British cuisine is pretty much like American cuisine, good but pretty basic food. Of course, I love shepherd's pie in pubs, but London is all about the good restaurants and chefs. My favourite restaurant is Pearl at the Renaissance Hotel in Holborn — the quality is good and the service is good. I also think your Chinatown is wonderful and I have had some of the best Chinese food ever there

Favourite celebrity chef?

Raymond Blanc is one of our favourites and I also like the Two Greedy Italians [Antonio Carluccio and Gennaro Cantalupo]



chefs] but I am also constantly reading magazines about cooking

How do you pick a good cut of meat?

First of all, find a good local butcher, such as the Hampstead Butcher on Rosslyn Hill in Hampstead. A good butcher will have a

wide variety of meat, professionally cut and displayed, in a clean environment. Top tips for choosing steak are: go for sirloin or ribeye as they have the most flavour, make sure the meat is appropriately aged — 20 days or more — and appropriately marbled, which is when you can see the small streaks of fat in the muscle

Any other tips for keen chefs?

If you like to cook

building consultancy work" in a tough property market. Yet he says that there is a strong base to build on. Arcadis UK's client list includes Thames Water, the Environment Agency, Scottish Water, Network Rail and the property company Development Securities. It was the project and cost manager for the construction of Arsenal's Emirates Station and has played a similar role on the Olympic Stadium in London.

The group is also working with the Solena Group and British Airways to create a sustainable jet fuel plant — the first of its kind in Europe — and in December helped to rebuild the set of *Coronation Street* as part of ITV's new production facility at Salford Quays in Greater Manchester.

"So, we are going to reorganise the UK around client focus, operational and technical excellence," he says, areas that he knows more than a little about after 20 years in the military and another 15 years in consultancy.

Mr Carroll joined the USAF after school and, over eight years, he went to