

Last issue, I left off telling you how **HMAS Melbourne's** crew is an almost addictively fit bunch of Aussies – plus three Kiwi ring-ins.

**A**ll hours of the day or night there's someone somewhere doing PT. The small gym is, apparently, fully booked 24/7 – so other popular spots include the flight deck, or the focsle (the open deck up front with the hints of interesting weaponry), or a range of other nooks and crannies, with rowing machines, cycle machines, treadmills, weights, mats, chin-up bars, gymnastic rings and a host of other fitness apparatus salted away (though more often than not, pulled out and in use) in strange and surprising places all over the ship.

Speaking of fitness – and, indeed, of salting things away in strange and surprising places all over the ship – the cooks have a lot to do with the fitness and general health of the ship too.

The best-in-fleet-award-winning galley team are a very hard-working cadre, keeping the ship's company happy and healthy with four square meals a day. That's right, with the rotating rosters and a good portion of the crew working all hours, the scran (shit created by Royal Australian Navy) or food line is open 2330 to 0045 for the 'midnight meal'.

Other than that, breakfast is served from 0645 to 0815, lunch 1130 to 1245 and dinner 1645 to 1815.

The team behind it all is a small band of 'fitters and turners' (fit it into pots and turn it into shit) – though this nickname is strictly affectionate, especially on this ship.

During the day, the kitchen is manned by a staff of five, cooking today's offerings and preparing tomorrow's.

At night the lone night cook prepares tomorrow's deserts and salads as well as the midnight meal.

This is widely acknowledged as one of the worst jobs on the ship because the night cook works from 1730hr (5.30pm) to 0600hr, and then has to try and sleep during the day while the ship is at its most active and most noisy.



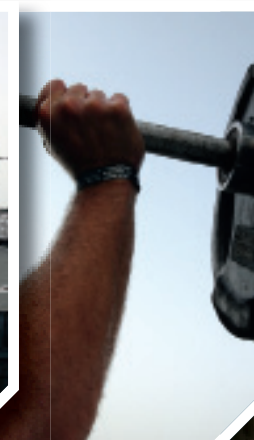
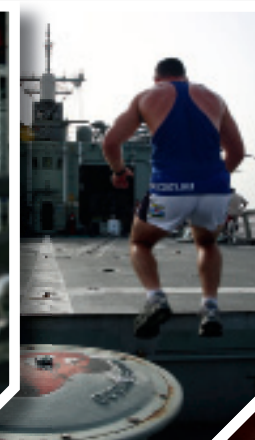
Anyway, the food prepared in this relatively small, hot and noisy kitchen is very tasty and very nutritious – designed so by the head cook, a lanky, gruff-but-lovable ex-Army Armoured Corps character who gave me a very entertaining tour of his domain.

Petty Officer Guy Chloesy starts off by explaining, "US ships are designed as a hull for carrying weapon systems. When they have that sorted, then they worry about command and control facilities. Only after that do they worry about human sustainment."

This immediately explains the intimate, so-called VIP accommodation I'm still sharing with the padre (which I learn, used to be

# Aussie superpower

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Above: AHSO Matthew Barber, ASCS Dylan Thomas and LSCS Joshua Tatana seconded from the New Zealand Navy.

Above left x 3: Members of the embarked Navy clearance divers pump out a gruelling PT session in honour of their fallen comrade Sergeant Brett Wood, 2 Commando Regiment, who was killed in Afghanistan on 23 May last year.

Top: Petty Officer Guy Chloesy helps bring supplies aboard.

Main pic: Aviation deck hands catch the helicopter's recovery cable during RA or 'recovery assist' practice.