

DINING //

New restaurants, groundbreaking chefs and the latest food trends.



Andrew Zimmern on 3 TV Chefs to Watch

Marc Forgione, Michael Voltaggio and Graham Elliot: three stars on and off the set.

A generation ago, you could count the chefs cooking on TV on one hand. Today, you would need one of NASA's supercomputers to keep track of all the stars in the television food constellation. Still, the majority of food faces on TV can't cook a lick, and they are only seen on the network's cooking-competition shows. Like clouds on a spring day, they hurry in and out of our consciousness without any impact aside from a few minutes of entertainment. It doesn't take a lot of cooking skill or gravitas to be on TV for your 15 minutes of fame.

Sadly, a lot of our country's most amazing young culinary talents get lumped into that pool, or on the flip side, they aren't given the frame of reference that allows most people to realize just how talented some of them are. Others don't even get to cook on the shows they are famously attached to. *Iron Chef* and *Top Chef Masters* offer you world-class cooking at nearly every turn, but you need a scorecard to tell which chefs on *Chopped*, *Top Chef*, *The Next Iron Chef America* and *Next Food Network Star* you should pay attention to. Here are three chefs who stand out from the crowd.



Iron Chefs Marc Forgione on the "set" of his NYC restaurant kitchen.

PHOTO: EVAN SUNG (MARC FORGIONE); STEVE HENKE (ANDREW)



New York City

1

Marc Forgione

THE RESTAURANT: Restaurant Marc Forgione, 134 Reade Street, Manhattan, marcforcione.com

AS SEEN ON: *The Next Iron Chef*, *Iron Chef*

GOOD GENES: It's no surprise that Forgione wound up in a kitchen. His father, chef Larry Forgione, is known as the godfather of American cuisine—a star chef before chefs were stars. Though son followed in father's footsteps, Forgione's laid-back approach to food is all his own.

ATMOSPHERE: Restaurant Marc Forgione has the feel of a cozy neighborhood spot, but it attracts folks from all over the country. Exposed brick, rustic wood tables, soft candlelight—yep, this is a good date spot. Forgione describes his restaurant as “fine dining without the BS”—so think roasted monkfish with Thai green curry rather than *supremes de poisson avec sauce Thailandaise*.

ON THE MENU: It's all about seasonal ingredients and big, bold global flavors. Start out with the *hiramasa* tartare, served with avocado, Sichuan buttons, toasted pine nuts and Saratoga chips. And if you're dining with a group (or really hungry), remember these four words: *chicken under a brick*. It's a NYC Forgione classic.

COOKING IN KITCHEN STADIUM: So is an *Iron Chef* battle really as intense as it looks? “[It’s] a real rush,” Forgione says. “It’s like a busy Saturday night service times a hundred!”

1 *Hiramasa* tartare 2 Forgione, right, preparing chicken under a brick 3 Restaurant Marc Forgione 4 Strip steak with marbled potatoes.



PHOTOS: EVAN SUNG




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2 Los Angeles Michael Voltaggio

THE RESTAURANT: ink., 8360 Melrose Avenue, LA, mvink.com

AS SEEN ON: *Top Chef*, Season Six

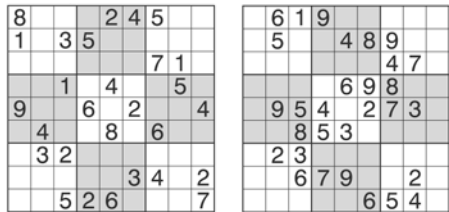
BACKGROUND: Voltaggio, a Maryland native, began cooking in his teens. He completed the Greenbrier Culinary Apprenticeship Program at 21; ran the grill room at the Ritz in Naples, Florida; earned a Michelin star as executive chef at Charlie Palmer's Dry Creek Kitchen; and was chef José Andrés' right-hand man in launching the spectacular LA-based restaurant, The Bazaar. Then he auditioned for *Top Chef*.



LATEST VENTURE: Two years after taking home the title of *Top Chef* (beating out his own brother, Bryan, and Kevin Gillespie), Voltaggio is striking out on his own. His highly anticipated first restaurant, ink., opened this spring on Melrose Avenue, the heart of LA's independent, chef-driven food scene. It's a no-fuss kind of place; food freaks and grandmas will feel very welcome, but you'll want to leave the picky eaters in your family at home.

1 Chef Michael Voltaggio on the set of *Top Chef* **2** "Turbot, Earth, Ash & Sea" at ink.

ON THE MENU: Voltaggio draws from all of LA's diverse influences, creating what he calls "modern LA cuisine". You'll find a spicy Thai dish alongside a traditional American one (pigeon pastrami on rye) followed up by cuttlefish ramen with crispy pig's ear. Small plates are meant for sharing, so in one evening you can eat your way across the globe.



SOLUTION: **DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆**

8	7	6	1	2	4	5	9	3
1	9	3	5	7	6	2	4	8
5	2	4	8	3	9	7	1	6
2	6	1	3	4	7	8	5	9
9	5	8	6	1	2	3	7	4
3	4	7	9	8	5	6	2	1
7	3	2	4	9	8	1	6	5
6	1	9	7	5	3	4	8	2
4	8	5	2	6	1	9	3	7



SOLUTION: **DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆**

4	6	1	9	7	3	2	8	5
7	5	2	6	4	8	9	1	3
8	3	9	2	1	5	4	7	6
3	7	4	1	6	9	8	5	2
6	9	5	4	8	2	7	3	1
2	1	8	5	3	7	6	9	4
9	2	3	8	5	4	1	6	7
5	4	6	7	9	1	3	2	8
1	8	7	3	2	6	5	4	9

POD RENAME BLAM
 ACE EMINOR LAVES
 BEN PIÑACOLADAS
 LAS VEGAS DAHLIA
 ONE EAR STEP ELS
 SLAP ASTA
 APATTIKI OMBRE
 JALAPEÑO PEPPERS
 ANGLORASEA HASP
 STATISTO
 BAPISAOTHREAT
 AMIGOS MARIACHI
 MAÑANA SEÑOR OYL
 BIOL DOGOOD NED
 ANNA SPASMS OSE

DINING // Andrew Zimmern



3
Chicago
Graham Elliot

THE RESTAURANT: graham elliot, 217 West Huron Street, Chicago, grahamelliot.com

AS SEEN ON: *MasterChef*, *Top Chef Masters*

HISTORY: You may know him as the bespectacled judge on Fox's *MasterChef*, but Elliot isn't a food-scene newbie. In 2004, *Food & Wine* magazine named him one of the country's best new chefs. He's received three James Beard nominations (aka the Oscars of

1 Chef Graham Elliot **2** Elliot's signature caesar salad **3** Elliot preparing a dish on the set of *Top Chef Masters*.



food), and earned perfect reviews for his food at Avenues at The Peninsula Chicago from the *Chicago Tribune*, *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Chicago* magazine. His River North restaurant, graham elliot, opened in 2008 to raves, and it earned a Michelin star in 2011.

THE VIBE: Though Elliot sports more badges of honor than a boy scout, there's nothing pretentious about his restaurant, housed in a 19th-century loft with exposed beams and brick. He's swapped white tablecloths for simple wood tables. Servers wear jeans and Chuck Taylors, the soundtrack ranges from Guns N' Roses to The Smiths and the clientele ranges from hipsters to folks with hip replacements.



HI-LOW CUISINE: Elliot is the Yoda of melding highbrow and lowbrow. Don't be surprised when some of your freshman-year favorites such as Cheez-Its and PBR hold as much gravitas as, say, the heirloom duck confit. His deconstructed caesar arrives with a house-made, savory brioche Twinkie filled with Parmesan mousse; Atlantic monkfish comes with cheese hushpuppies. "We are truly an original restaurant, with our own music, design, cuisine," says Elliot. "We're not French, we're not Asian, we're not molecular. We're graham elliot."

LATEST VENTURE: Grab lunch at grahamwich, Elliot's new River North sandwich/soft serve/soda shop. If you've never been there, Elliot says you can't go wrong with the grilled cheese (Wisconsin cheddar, Italian prosciutto, tomato marmalade and cheese curds), truffled popcorn and a house-made vanilla kola.

PHOTOS: JIM COLOMBO (1); GRAHAM ELLIOT (2); TOP CHEF MASTERS SEASON 11; 2009 BRAVO MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED (3).

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