

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**GORDON RAMSAY, JOE BASTIANICH AND GRAHAM ELLIOT
ANNOUNCE THE “MASTERCHEF” TOP 14**

Teacher, Software Engineer, Construction Worker and Doctor Among Finalists

**Competition Continues Next Week with a Two-Hour Episode on a New Night
Wednesday, August 18, on FOX**

After scouring the nation for the best amateur cooks in America, the judges of MASTERCHEF have chosen the 14 hopefuls who will compete for the title of America’s first-ever MASTERCHEF. The Top 14 are Sheetal Bhagat, Tony Carbone, Jake Gandolfo, Sharone Hakman, Jenna Hamiter, Kim Dung “Slim” Huynh, Faruq Jenkins, Mike Kim, Lee Knaz, David Miller, Whitney Miller, Tracy Nailor, Avis White and Sheena Zadeh.

The competition heats up next when the MASTERCHEF Top 14 enter the kitchen on a new night and time beginning Wednesday, Aug. 18 (8:00-10:00 PM ET/PT) on FOX.

Throughout the season, the home cooks will undergo a series of high-pressure individual and team challenges from creating incredible gourmet dishes using mystery ingredients and identifying components in a complex dish to providing an all-American send-off meal for hundreds of U.S. Marines and catering a high-end wedding. The MASTERCHEF judges – Gordon Ramsay, Joe Bastianich and Graham Elliot – are looking for the contestant who possesses a refined palate as well as the right blend of skill, passion and creativity.

Below are the Top 14 home cooks on MASTERCHEF:

Sheetal Bhagat

Age: 37

Occupation: Teacher

Hometown: Chicago, IL



Cooking inspiration: My mom had the biggest influence on me. Everything she made used fresh ingredients; there was nothing canned or processed. I have carried her philosophy of healthy eating using only pure fresh ingredients into my cooking today.

Tony Carbone

Age: 31

Occupation: Server

Hometown: Boston, MA



Cooking inspiration: My mother and grandmother. They spoiled me with great food growing up, so I knew that when I got older if I wanted to keep eating as good as I did growing up, then I'd need to learn to cook like them.

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Jake Gandolfo

Age: 38

Occupation: Construction Worker

Hometown: Santa Cruz, CA



Cooking inspiration: My mother and Julia Child. Some of my earliest memories are of standing on a stool and canning vegetables from the family garden with my mom while watching “The French Chef” on television.

Sharone Hakman

Age: 28

Occupation: Financial Advisor

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA



Cooking inspiration: I’d have to say I inspired myself. When I was a kid, my mother was not part of our lives, and my dad was always working to support us. When my grandma wasn’t around, I had to go into our fridge and make something out of nothing. I taught myself how to create dishes at a very young age. This “survival” mode was how I started out, but cooking then became a creative outlet that I haven’t been able to stop since.

Jenna Hamiter

Age: 23

Occupation: Homemaker

Hometown: Euless, TX



Cooking inspiration: My 85-year-old grandmother, who is a successful homemaker with nine children and 25 grandchildren. She’s has always been the gracious hostess, turning out spectacular desserts and parties for decades. I am thankful and privileged to still enjoy moments with her in the kitchen.

Kim Dung “Slim” Huynh

Age: 22

Occupation: Student

Hometown: Harvey, LA



Cooking inspiration: My mom. As a child, I spent a lot of time in the kitchen trying to see over the stove to find out what she was cooking.

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Faruq Jenkins

Age: 30

Occupation: Bartender

Hometown: Glendale, CA



Cooking inspiration: My mother and grandmother. My fondest memories of the holidays are staying up late and waking up early to help cook. The time I was able to spend with them in the kitchen was priceless.

Mike Kim

Age: 34

Occupation: Server

Hometown: Redondo Beach, CA



Cooking inspiration: While my parents were instrumental in inspiring me to cook, fishing also played an important role. I started deep-sea fishing when I moved to California, and as I encountered a plethora of the freshest fish imaginable – from Yellowtail to Pacific Sheepshead and more – my understanding, passion and inspiration for cooking reached a whole new level.

Lee Knaz

Age: 27

Occupation: Bartender

Hometown: Venice, CA



Cooking inspiration: I grew up in a family of non-cooks, but growing up in Israel I would watch hours of cooking shows. My first memories are of satellite-broadcasted French channels that would air cooking shows with Joël Robuchon and Jacques Pépin. I didn't understand a word they were saying, but I was completely fascinated by them.

David Miller

Age: 29

Occupation: Software Engineer

Hometown: Newton Centre, MA



Cooking inspiration: My mother. I always loved helping her in the kitchen – whether it was doing prep work, making gravy or doing dishes. As a teenager, I was vegetarian, and my mom accommodated that – she loves making people happy through food.

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Whitney Miller

Age: 22

Occupation: Student

Hometown: Poplarville, MS



Cooking inspiration: My great-grandmother. My family would eat lunch at her house every Sunday when I was younger. I spent hours watching her make homemade biscuits, seafood gumbo, lemon meringue pies and countless other Southern favorites.

Tracy Nailor

Age: 42

Occupation: Doctor

Currently Resides: Atlanta, GA



Cooking inspiration: My mother is the person who taught me the fundamentals of cooking. When I create a dish or prepare a family favorite, I am carrying on her legacy and honoring her memory by doing something she loved. I am grateful we were able to share that time.

Avis White

Age: 47

Occupation: Elderly Caregiver

Currently Resides: Vacherie, LA



Cooking Inspiration: My grandmother always instilled in me the importance of family. She also felt it was important that I knew how to cook, clean, pay bills, and take care of myself at a young age. The one thing she wanted me to be really good at was cooking and baking, so she spent countless hours teaching me how to do just that. I am so grateful for those life lessons because it has made me the great cook that I am.

Sheena Zadeh

Age: 26

Occupation: Marketing Executive

Hometown: Anaheim, CA



Cooking Inspiration: My first urge to cook came from watching cooking shows on television, but I was truly inspired to cook when I saw the smile on my dad's face the first time I put dinner on the table for my family.

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Additionally, recipes inspired by the MASTERCHEF Top 14 will be featured in the upcoming “MasterChef Cookbook” published by Rodale Books, set to be released on September 1. For more information, please visit www.fox.com/masterchef.

MASTERCHEF is produced by Reveille, Shine TV and One Potato Two Potato and is based on a format created by Franc Roddam and Shine TV. Shine International handles distribution for the MASTERCHEF format. Elisabeth Murdoch, Franc Roddam, Mark Koops, Howard T. Owens, Gordon Ramsay, Adeline Ramage Rooney, Pat Llewellyn, JD Roth and Todd Nelson serve as executive producers.

[EDITOR’S NOTE: For episodic photos and more information on MASTERCHEF, please visit <http://www.foxflash.com/div.php/main/page?aID=1z2z2z308>.]

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