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*High-res images, show footage and interviews available upon request.

**FOOD NETWORK STAR RETURNS FOR EIGHTH SEASON WITH
STAR-STUDED CHALLENGES, BRAND-NEW FORMAT
AND A FRESH CAST OF HOPEFULS**

**BOBBY FLAY AND GIADA DE LAURENTIIS JOINED BY ALTON BROWN, EACH SERVING AS
MENTOR/PRODUCER TO THEIR OWN HAND-SELECTED TEAM OF FINALISTS**

***Special Two-Hour Series Premiere Airs Sunday, May 13th at 9pm ET/PT;
Preceded by Casting Special on Saturday, May 12th at 9pm ET/PT***

Audience Vote Will Determine Winner, Announced in Season Finale Sunday, July 22nd at 9pm ET/PT

NEW YORK – APRIL 2, 2012 – Food Network’s long-running hit primetime series *Food Network Star* returns to New York City this May with fifteen talented hopefuls and completely new twists for season eight – this year, returning stars **Bobby Flay** and **Giada De Laurentiis** move from behind the judge’s table to square off with culinary favorite **Alton Brown** for a three-way team competition to find the next *Food Network Star*, beginning with a special two-hour premiere episode on Sunday, May 13th at 9pm ET/PT. Bobby, Giada and Alton, all television producers in addition to being culinary superstars, lead the charge to find and develop the new talent by each hand-selecting a team of five finalists, who they will produce and mentor through the ‘Star’ experience to find one winner who possesses personality and kitchen chops. Viewers can also glance into the ‘Star’ finalist selection process, with a casting special airing on May 12th and in another turn to the series plot, viewers will vote online before the July 22nd finale to determine who will receive the ultimate prize: their own Food Network show, to be produced by their ‘Star’ team leader.

“Having Bobby, Giada and Alton compete against each other to discover and develop the next *Food Network Star* took this series to a whole new level,” said Bob Tuschman, General Manager and Senior Vice President, Programming and Production, Food Network. “These three iconic star/producers are ideal mentors for the talented hopefuls they found – but it’s hard to say if the competition was more intense among the finalists or their three Star mentors.”

Season eight finalists are: **Philip “Ippy” Aiona** (Kamuela, HI), **Judson Allen** (Chicago), **Martie Duncan** (Birmingham, Ala.), **Emily Elynn** (Orlando, Fla.), **Martita Jara** (San Diego), **Eric Lee** (Petaluma, Calif.), **Yvan Lemoine** (Maspeth, N.Y.), **Josh Lyons** (Jupiter, Fla.), **Linkie Marais** (North Attleborough, Mass.), **Nikki Martin** (West Hollywood, Calif.), **Malcolm Mitchell** (Washington, D.C.), **Michele Ragussis** (Brooklyn, N.Y.), **Cristie Schoen** (New Orleans), **Kara Sigle** (Chicago) and **Justin Warner** (Brooklyn, N.Y.).

In the premiere episode, the fifteen hopefuls arrive in the *Food Network Star* kitchen in New York City to meet Bobby Flay, Giada De Laurentiis and Alton Brown - the culinary superstars who hand-selected them to compete on their teams. After meeting with their team leader, special guest **Robert Irvine** challenges the teams to their first “Star Challenge” - to create their own pop-up restaurant from the ground up, with an extremely limited budget and very little time. Each episode also features a “Producer’s Challenge,” where the contestants up for elimination each shoot a segment with their ‘Star’ mentor/producer to be presented to the selection committee in the “pitch room.” Returning judges Food Network executives **Bob Tuschman** and **Susie Fogelson** decide who stays and goes, along with a roster of guest judges scheduled to join.

Upcoming episodes feature amped-up challenges to see who has true Star quality, including a Chopped-style battle judged by **Alex Guarnaschelli**, **Scott Conant** and **Marc Murphy**; a **Ted Allen**-hosted New York Fashion Week food makeover challenge with a cash prize courtesy of Discover Card; holiday-themed specials hosted by **Guy Fieri**; and a Miami beachside competition where finalists shop at Target to style a VIP event for **Paula Deen**. Season guest stars also include Food Network’s **Sunny Anderson**, **Anne Burrell**, **Melissa d’Arabian**, **Jeff Mauro**, **Aarón Sanchez** and **Geoffrey Zakarian**, along with *Entertainment Weekly*’s **Jess Cagle** and **Jill Bernstein**, *Entertainment Tonight*’s **Christina McLarty** and *Serious Eats*’ **Ed Levine**.

For more *Food Network Star*, visit www.foodnetwork.com/star all season long for video recaps, exclusive interviews and blogs, behind-the-scenes footage, photo galleries, exclusive snapshots from the ‘Star’ house and the return of “Star Scrapbooks,” a look inside the pages of the finalists’ personal journals. Viewers can also join a season-long *Food Network Star* digital game, where players accumulate points and earn badges by predicting the outcome of each episode and participate in weekly fan votes. The series culminates with an unprecedented finale on Sunday, July 22nd at 9pm ET/PT, when an audience online vote will determine which finalist will become the next *Food Network Star*.

Food Network Star is produced by CBS EYE Too Productions.

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FOOD NETWORK (www.foodnetwork.com) is a unique lifestyle network, website and magazine that connects viewers to the power and joy of food. The network strives to be viewers' best friend in food and is committed to leading by teaching, inspiring and empowering through its talent and expertise. Food Network is distributed to more than 100 million U.S. households and averages more than 9.9 million unique web users monthly. Since launching in 2009, *Food Network Magazine* has tripled its rate base and delivers a circulation of 1.4 million. Headquartered in New York, Food Network has a growing international presence with programming in more than 150 countries, including 24 hour networks in Great Britain, India, Asia and Africa. Scripps Networks Interactive (NYSE: SNI), which also owns and operates Cooking Channel (www.cookingchanneltv.com), DIY Network (www.diynetwork.com), Great American Country (www.gactv.com), HGTV (www.hgtv.com), and Travel Channel (www.travelchannel.com), is the manager and general partner.