



Press Contact: Lauren Sklar  
Phone: 646-336-3745; Email: [lsklar@foodnetwork.com](mailto:lsklar@foodnetwork.com)

## **FOOD NETWORK STAR** *Season 10 – Finalist Bios*

**Luca Della Casa**, 38 (San Antonio), was born in Torino, Italy and now resides in Texas. An adventurous, rugged outdoorsman with a passion for food, Luca has been in the food industry for over 20 years, working his way up from dishwasher to prep cook to line cook to executive chef. He learned to cook with his family and is determined to bring people together around a table to share food, Italian-style.

**Emma Frisch**, 30 (Ithaca, NY), is the girl-next-door who has traveled the world – she is a first generation American and comes from an Italian and British background, with family members on five continents. She once owned a cafe in Nicaragua and worked on a farm in Connecticut. Now residing in upstate New York, Emma is a food blogger and owner of Frisch Kitchen, where she brings a world of nontraditional food experience to the table. Her take on food is fun and fresh, and she is a natural teacher who believes anyone can become a good cook.

**Nicole Gaffney**, 29 (Atlantic City, NJ), isn't just another personal chef - her magnetic personality and innate culinary talent set her apart from the crowd. She grew up cooking with her Sicilian grandparents and comes from a family of commercial fisherman, and her 'coastal cuisine' take on food is heavily influenced by her family and growing up in a seaside town. The kitchen is her retreat, and a career in food has always been her dream.

**Loreal Gavin**, 26 (Indianapolis), is originally from Lafayette, LA and has been cooking for 11 years. A motorcycle-riding, guitar-playing chick who loves tattoos, she attended Sullivan University for culinary arts and is also trained in baking and pastry. She was raised by her grandmother, who taught her to cook from her soul. Loreal is a true individual who believes every meal should be interesting.

**Chris Kyler**, 32 (Stafford, VA), received culinary training while in the Navy, where he was known for his slick sense of humor and charisma. After a few years working in other people's restaurants, he was inspired to open his own business and now runs Kyler's A+ Catering, a gourmet mobile catering company with an emphasis on fresh and healthy foods. Chris is hilarious, energetic, fiercely competitive and ready to put his skills to the test.

**Kenny Lao**, 36 (New York City), grew up making Chinese dumplings with his mom, and his passion for that signature dish led to the creation of Rickshaw Dumpling Bar, where he is the owner and managing partner. Originally from California, Kenny's success in the ultra-competitive New York fast casual restaurant scene led to awards and accolades - and he is ready for more. He wants to take the intimidation out of cooking, and teach people how to make food that is simple, but delicious.

**Christopher Lynch**, 39 (New Orleans), graduated from the Culinary Institute of America, spent time working with some of the country's finest restaurateurs and has become a rock star chef in his own right. Chris carved his own food path with a modern take on the Cajun and Creole cuisine of his adopted hometown New Orleans. He is both talented and tough in the kitchen, and that killer combination makes him a force to reckon with.

**Lenny McNab**, 42 (Debeque, CO), is a one-of-a-kind gourmet cowboy. His over-the-top confidence and charm are only matched by his culinary skills. He trained in Germany and is now executive chef at a hunting ranch in the foothills of the Rockies. When he hangs up his apron, he is known to put on his rhinestone jacket and strap on his guitar to perform for the evening at the local honky tonk. With his signature hat, belt buckle and boots, you can't miss Lenny in a crowd - and he is ready to bring his unique take on food to the rest of the country.

**Aryen Moore-Alston**, 31 (Memphis), is a self-taught cook who was raised abroad in Italy, and some of her fondest childhood memories are making family meals in the kitchen with her late father, who passed away when she was a child. She has dabbled in many careers, including security technology, acting, dancing and graphic design - but food

has always been her passion. After living in Atlanta, Japan and Los Angeles, Aryen settled in Memphis to raise her three-year-old daughter and is ready to pursue her culinary dreams.

**Sarah Penrod**, 30 (League City, TX), is a born-and-bred Texan who comes from a family of entertainers. From musical theater to beauty pageants to country singing, Sarah has been performing her whole life. She also has serious culinary chops, and now owns her own catering and personal chef service. This sassy, feisty and fun chef has worked with celebrities and athletes, and always keeps things entertaining in the kitchen.

**Reuben Ruiz**, 27 (Miami), grew up in a traditional Cuban family that owns restaurants and started working in kitchens when he was just ten years old. He struggled with his weight for many years, but lost 100 pounds and kept it off - which is especially difficult when your family is in the restaurant industry. He specializes in healthy dishes with a Latin influence and lots of flavor. Honest, outspoken and high energy with a strong work ethic, Reuben is ready to inspire others with his journey.

**Donna Sonkin Shaw**, 42 (New York City), is dedicated to making health and nutrition taste delicious. She studied at the Institute for Integrative Nutrition and the Culinary Institute of America, and believes eating properly leads to overall health inside and out. She is a Certified Holistic Health Coach who works privately with clients and leads corporate workshops. Donna struggled with her weight as a child, so she understands the struggle of everyday eating - but her twist on healthy comfort food delivers the flavor and satisfaction to keep anyone on track.

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