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## ***FOOD NETWORK STAR: COMEBACK KITCHEN*** *(Season 2) Finalist Bios*

**Rob Burmeister** (Staten Island, NY) - Rob started out washing dishes over 25 years ago and hasn't looked back since. Previously a finalist on season 12 of *Food Network Star*, Rob currently runs a lunch program at a private school in New Jersey, along with operating a food truck business called Culinary Renegade Wandering Kitchen, and is the co-host of a food podcast.

**Emilia Cirker** (Washington, D.C.) - After graduating first in her class with a degree in French Culinary Arts, Emilia quickly climbed the kitchen ranks and ultimately landed her role as a Head Chef for The Washington Redskins. A finalist on season 11 of *Food Network Star*, Emilia is currently a startup consultant, while managing a food lifestyle blog and teaches private cooking classes in the D.C. area.

**Matthew Grunwald** (Scottsdale, AZ) - Matthew was the youngest finalist on season 11 of *Food Network Star*, but don't let his age and enthusiasm fool you: he's got the experience of a chef twice his age. At sixteen, he began working in professional kitchens, becoming a food writer by seventeen, and is now the corporate Executive Chef of national accounts for Nestlé Professional in Cleveland, OH.

**Josh Lyons** (Jupiter, FL) - A competitor on season 8 of *Food Network Star*, Josh has an affinity for food, music and entertaining, with an expertise in creating unexpected Asian fusion dishes. After spending years in a rock band and working in restaurants, Josh decided to go to culinary school. As an experienced sushi chef and restaurant consultant, Josh is currently a franchise owner of a healthy fast casual restaurant.

**Danushka Lysek** (New York City) - Danushka grew up in Canada, graduating top of her class from the Le Cordon Bleu Culinary Arts program. With a cultivated cooking style that represents different cultures and foods, Danushka competed on season 9 of *Food Network Star*. She is currently a private chef to working professionals from Aspen to Los Angeles to The Hamptons and New York City. Danushka has also competed on other Food Network cooking competitions.

**Jamika Pessoa** (Atlanta, GA) - Highlighting her bold twists on traditional dishes, especially those of her Southern and Caribbean heritages, Jamika has an innovative style, sassy personality, and inspiring tenacity in the kitchen. As a caterer to the stars and self-proclaimed "Life of the Party," since competing on season 5 of *Food Network Star*, Jamika has been featured as a contributor and guest judge for numerous cooking competition shows. In an effort to meet the demands of west coast clientele, Jamika recently expanded her catering business to Los Angeles.

**Joy Thompson** (Lexington, NC) - Between running a catering company, food product line, and wrangling five children, Joy also competed on season 12 of *Food Network Star*. Drawing inspiration from her childhood, Joy manages to maintain a self-deprecating wit through all the chaos, creating elevated Southern food such as fried green tomatoes and chicken and waffles.

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