



## ***Halloween Baking Championship*** ***Host and Judges Bios (2015)***

### **Richard Blais**

Richard Blais is a successful chef, restaurateur, James Beard Award-nominated cookbook author and television personality. After graduating from the Culinary Institute of America, he went on to train at some of the world's most esteemed restaurants, including The French Laundry, Daniel, Chez Panisse, and el Bulli. He serves as a regular guest judge on Food Network, and after winning Bravo's "Top Chef All-Stars" he became a recurring judge on season 12 of the series, and a main judge on the upcoming season 13. He is the founder of Trail Blais, Inc., a forward-thinking culinary company that has designed and operated popular eateries throughout the country, and currently owns and operates Juniper & Ivy, his first West Coast restaurant in San Diego, as well as multiple locations of Flip Burger Boutique.

### **Ron Ben-Israel**

As Chef-Owner of *Ron Ben-Israel Cakes*, one of the country's finest couture cake studios, Ron Ben-Israel's cakes have been hand-delivered to destinations throughout the continental U.S and abroad. Ron started his confectionery adventures after a fifteen-year career as a professional modern dancer. Upon retiring from performing with companies spanning three continents, he utilized his art training, military background and ballet regime into the discipline of pastry arts. After arriving in New York City, Ron's cakes were discovered by Martha Stewart while on display in the windows of Mikimoto on Fifth Avenue. In 1999 he established his flagship design studio and bakery in Manhattan's fashionable SoHo neighborhood. He a Master Pastry Instructor at the International Culinary Center in New York City, and has been awarded prestigious gold medals for his confectionery achievements.

### **Carla Hall**

A native of Nashville, Tennessee, Carla Hall received a degree in Accounting from Howard University, but traveling through Europe awakened her passion for food, and inspired a new career path. Carla attended L'Academie de Cuisine in Maryland, where she completed her culinary training, going on to work as a Sous Chef at the Henley Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. She also served as Executive Chef at both The State Plaza Hotel and The Washington Club, and has taught classes at CulinAerie and her alma mater L'Academie de Cuisine. Her approach to cooking blends together her classic French training and Southern upbringing for a twist on traditional favorites. In addition to being a judge on *Halloween Baking Championship*, Carla is a co-host of ABC's daytime talk show, *The Chew*, and is best known as a competitor and fan favorite on Bravo's *Top Chef* and *Top Chef All Stars*. She is the owner of Carla Hall Petite Cookies, an artisan cookie company that specializes in creating sweet and savory "petite bites of love." In 2012 Carla released her debut cookbook, *Cooking with Love: Comfort Food That Hugs You*, and in 2014 released *Carla's Comfort Food: Favorite Dishes from Around the World*. In 2015, she opened her first restaurant Carla Hall's Southern Kitchen, a fast casual eatery featuring iconic Nashville classic dishes and family recipes. Carla lives in Washington, DC with her husband Matthew Lyons and stepson Noah.

### **Sherry Yard**

A Brooklyn, New York native, Sherry Yard began her culinary career at the venerable Rainbow Room. She lived and cooked in London, then returned to New York City to work the stoves at Montrachet and Tribeca Grill. She moved west to San Francisco, establishing herself as a prominent pastry chef at celebrated Campton Place. Wolfgang Puck summoned her to Los Angeles where she became the Executive Pastry Chef/Partner for his worldwide operations. For twenty years, her innovative dishes and desserts were a staple at the Academy Awards Governor's Ball, the Grammy Awards and the Emmy Awards. Working with Wolfgang, she produced segments for his Emmy Award winning cooking show, and later was tapped by Magical Elves Production Company for the role of Executive Culinary Producer for *Top Chef: Just Desserts*.

Yard serves as Vice President of Culinary Development for iPic Entertainment Group, where she leads culinary innovation. 2014 brought her first concept City Perch Kitchen + Bar – a seasonal American Dining Room, to Bethesda, Maryland. This local restaurant celebrates the bounty of the Mid-Atlantic, sourcing ingredients from nearby farms and waters. Next up, The Tuck Room gastro-lounge is slated for openings in Miami, Houston, and New York. This cocktail driven restaurant will showcase a progressive menu of small indulgent bites to shareable social plates. In 2016, Yard will revive the Los Angeles icon Helms Bakery as Chef and Owner. Helms will be revitalized into a multi-space operation, with an exceptional bakery, as well as various vignettes to cater to all hungry diners.

Throughout her career, she has earned the praise of her critics and peers with multiple accolades, including three James Beard Awards for the Foundation's prestigious hall of fame "Who's Who of Food & Beverage in America" for her significant contributions to the culinary profession, "Outstanding Pastry Chef of the Year" and "Best Baking Book." Yard serves on the board of numerous philanthropic organizations and is a driving force of the Careers through Culinary Arts Program (C-CAP). She is involved in fundraising efforts for the Women's Cancer Research Center, Special Olympics, American Cancer Society and the Citymeals.

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