



Press Contact: Lauren Sklar
Phone: 646-336-3745; Email: lsklar@foodnetwork.com

ALL-STAR ACADEMY

Contestant Bios (2016)

Lee Abbott (Santa Barbara, California): A dedicated single dad of two young children, Lee is a seventh-generation Californian who describes his food philosophy as “Ranch & Sea.” He grew up in wine country on the coast and believes fresh, vibrant local ingredients bring the most impact to any dish. A video producer by day, Lee is an athletic, outdoorsy guy known for using big zesty flavors, as well as his spot-on palette for wine, beer and spirits pairings to enhance his Santa Barbara-style cooking.

Natasha Clement (La Place, Louisiana): Mom-of-three Natasha has been in the restaurant industry for over 15 years, as a server, bartender and manager. She became so inspired by the food she was serving that she began experimenting in her own kitchen. She has become a sophisticated cook who can make everything from down-home Louisiana Gumbo to gourmet fare. She lost her home and car in Hurricane Isaac, so the past few years have been tough for her family – but hardworking Natasha is ready to turn it all around and look toward the future.

Anna Cooper (Houston, Texas): Though she was always a good cook, Anna really fell in love with food in Paris, where she lived for a short time with her husband until their trip was cut short due to family tragedies. Inspired to make dishes like Boeuf Bourguignon and homemade Macarons, Anna even went on to win several cooking competitions. Anna treats her dishes like pieces of art, and her dream is to pay off her student loans, attend culinary school in Paris and move forward with a career in food.

Lynn Duffy (Cold Spring, New York): Lynn was raised in a traditional Italian family and she makes everything from scratch – her pasta is handmade, her sauce is jarred at home and her mozzarella is fresh. Her mom was her biggest influence in the kitchen, and taught her to make homemade meatballs when she was four years old. Now a married mother of two teenage boys, Lynn works three jobs and still finds the time to make three home cooked meals a day for her family – and she's ready to make food her fulltime career.

Monica Folken (Las Vegas, Nevada): Now that her four sons are grown and she has two granddaughters, Glam-ma Monica is ready to follow her heart and pursue her passion for cooking and attend culinary school. This sassy and confident empty nester grew up in North Carolina and began cooking as soon she could walk, and she recently relocated to Las Vegas with her husband. She takes classic family dishes and gives them her own unique flair and describes her style as “Southern with a French twist.”

Zoe Kelly (Miami, Florida): Twenty-four-year-old Zoe was born in Venezuela and moved to the United States when she was seven, and she spent her childhood at the stove cooking traditional Latin dishes with her mother. Because she wears her heart on her sleeve, Zoe believes people underestimate her and don't realize that under her bubbly personality lies a true competitor. Food is her passion and she is ready to bring her take on Latin flavors to the Academy.

Dain Lee (New York City): Self-taught cook Dain was interested in cooking from a young age, but didn't begin creating his own dishes until he moved to New York City for school – now 34, he hasn't stopped since. He became obsessed with eating in the city's finest restaurants, which was way too expensive on his student budget, so he decided to start recreating those high-end dishes at home. He treats his kitchen like a science lab, where he is always experimenting with new techniques and creating multi-course meals for his friends.

Lisa Washington (Atlanta, Georgia): Lisa has appreciated good food since childhood, and she grew up eating delicious meals prepared by her father, a professional chef, and her mother, a talented home cook. Growing up on Southern food, Lisa has expanded her food repertoire to mix and match different cuisines to create gourmet meals. Now a married mother and grandmother, she developed health issues because of kidney disease, which led to a kidney transplant donated by her husband. Lisa studied Holistic Nutrition and Medicine to begin a healthy lifestyle, and has learned to turn healthy, plant-based ingredients into delicious dishes. She is a true survivor and determined to cook for the win.



Press Contact: Lauren Sklar
Phone: 646-336-3745; Email: lsklar@foodnetwork.com

Jermaine Wright (Queens, New York): Jermaine is a hip-hop dancer who grew up in South Jamaica, Queens in New York on the bold Caribbean flavors of his mom's cooking. He got in trouble as a kid for experimenting in the kitchen, but as soon as his family realized how good his food tasted he was immediately assigned dinner duty. Now living upstate, Jermaine's meals have become more elaborate and he is known to serve eight-course dinner parties for 30 guests. He is still extremely close with his mom, and wants to bring home the win for her.

#