



IRON CHEF GAUNTLET Chef Competitor Bios

Nyeshia Arrington (Los Angeles, California)

Chef Nyeshia Arrington has been in love with the kitchen since age five, cooking alongside her grandmother while growing up in Southern California. A graduate of the Art Institute of California in Los Angeles, her resume includes work with legendary French Chef Joel Robuchon at his Michelin and award-winning Las Vegas restaurants L'Atelier and The Mansion, as well as renowned Chefs Raphael Lunetta and Josiah Citrin of Santa Monica. During Chef Arrington's tenure as Executive Chef at Wilshire restaurant, she was named a "Rising Star" by Brad Johnson, restaurant critic of *Angeleno*. In 2012, Nyeshia was recognized by Zagat.com as one of the "30 Under 30 - LA's Hottest Up-And-Comers." Arrington offers food experiences including a dinner installation titled "Food is Art," hosting cooking demonstrations and events worldwide. In 2015, Nyeshia crafted the creative cooking vision behind Progressive California Cuisine at Leona, in the heart of Venice. During her tenure with Leona, GQ Magazine named Arrington's Hibiscus-Cured Yellowtail dish "Most Sexy of 2016" and she was also awarded the title of "Chef of the Year" by Eater LA. In 2016, Arrington was awarded "Top 10 Dish of Los Angeles 2016" by Jonathan Gold. She continues to innovate by drawing inspiration from her diverse cultural background and French-technique while maintaining her mission to spread the message of love through food.

Jason Dady (San Antonio, Texas)

Since 2001, Texas native Chef Jason Dady has had a vision to raise the bar of dining in his hometown San Antonio. His efforts have not gone unnoticed: he has earned the title of "Best Chef San Antonio" by *San Antonio Current* and *San Antonio Magazine*, been honored as a James Beard semifinalist, and has received other recognitions including a "40 Under 40 Rising Star" in the *San Antonio Business Journal* and a StarChefs.com Rising Stars Restaurateur Award. Additionally, his signature barbeque is listed as one of "Top 50 in the World" by *Texas Monthly*, and Dady recently earned CultureMap's Tastemaker Award for "Chef of the Year" in 2016. He currently helms Jason Dady Restaurants, alongside his brother Jake and wife Crystal. Dady first appeared on the restaurant scene in 2001 with The Lodge Restaurant of Castle Hills, featuring one of the city's first tasting menus, followed up by the modern American cuisine at BIN 555 Restaurant & Wine Bar in 2004. He then refocused on returning to the cuisine where his roots are, fine Italian, with the launch of Tre Trattoria—now his flagship—in 2007, creating handmade pasta, along with distinctive flavor combinations in authentic entrées. His current concepts include the Northern Italian-focused Tre Enoteca (2015); the family-friendly Texas pit 'cue at the award-winning Two Bros BBQ Market (2008); the modest, saloon-styled B&D Ice House (2014); and The Bin (2016), a classic Barcelona Spanish tapas bar; along with DUK Truck, a mobile kitchen for offsite catering that can also be found on occasion cruising the streets of San Antonio. Dady introduced the coastal seafood experience of Shuck Shack in July 2015 and the opening of a second Two Bros BBQ Market is planned for 2017.

Sarah Gruenberg (Chicago, Illinois)

Since her childhood cooking with her grandparents on their ranch in Victoria, Texas, Chef Sarah Gruenberg knew she was destined to work in the culinary world. Originally from Houston, Gruenberg moved to Chicago in 2005 to join the team at the award-winning Spiaggia under the leadership of Tony Mantuano. Beginning as a line cook, she quickly rose the ranks to Chef di Cucina in 2008 and then Executive Chef in 2010. During her tenure as Executive Chef, Spiaggia was awarded one Michelin Star for three consecutive years. After graduating from culinary school in 2001, she started her first career-changing job with a position at the iconic Brennan's of Houston and by 2003 was named the restaurant's youngest female sous chef. Gruenberg has traveled throughout Italy, Asia, Europe and the U.S., which has inspired her culinary approach of "following the food" and truly understanding "the dish" by knowing the people and culture that created it. She has been named a "Rising Star Chef" by *Chicago Social* magazine in 2009 and 2016 and Eater Chicago's "Chef of the Year" in the 2011 Eater Awards. Gruenberg is currently Chef/Partner of Monteverde Restaurant & Pastificio in Chicago's West Loop, which she opened in November 2015 with business partner and long-time friend Meg Sahs. The restaurant has received acclaimed reviews from various outlets, including three out of four stars by *The Chicago Tribune*. In 2016, Monteverde received numerous accolades including: one of *Food & Wine's* "America's Best Restaurants," a top 50 finalist in *Bon Appetit's* "Best New Restaurants" list, *Eater's*, "21 Best New Restaurants in America," *GQ's* "12 Best New Restaurants," *Eater Chicago's* "Restaurant of the Year" in the 2016 Eater Awards, the "Worth the Wait" award in *Chicago Tribune* Dining Awards, and named one of *Chicago Magazine's* "15 Best New Restaurants."

Michael Gulotta (New Orleans, Louisiana)

Born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, Chef Michael Gulotta began cooking in local restaurants at a young age. After graduating from the Chef John Folse Culinary Institute, he joined the newly opened Restaurant August under Chef John Besh. Gulotta then took leave to train in the Italian Riviera and Germany's Black Forest. When Hurricane Katrina hit, Michael returned home to help rebuild and assist with August's re-opening. He was named Chef de Cuisine in 2007 and led the award-winning kitchen for six years, while establishing relationships with local farmers and purveyors. He opened his first restaurant, MOPHO, in January of 2014 with his brother, Jeffrey Gulotta, and high-school friend, Jeffrey Bybee. Located in New Orleans' Mid City, MOPHO strives to be a true neighborhood restaurant and a destination for Southeast Asian inspired cuisine utilizing the Louisiana pantry. In its first year MOPHO was nominated for "America's Best New Restaurant" by *Bon Appetit Magazine* and named "Restaurant of the Year" by *New Orleans Magazine*. Gulotta was recently named



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one of "Top 30 Chefs to Watch" by *Plate Magazine*, "New Orleans Rising Star" by *Starchefs*, and 2016 "Best New Chef" by *Food & Wine* magazine. His team recently opened its second full service restaurant, Maypop, in the Central Business District of New Orleans.

Stephanie Izard (Chicago, Illinois)

Chef Stephanie Izard, James Beard "Best Chef: Great Lakes" recipient 2013, and 2011 *Food & Wine* "Best New Chef," is the Executive Chef/Partner of three Chicago restaurants, Girl & the Goat, Little Goat, and Duck Duck Goat. A 2011 James Beard "Best New Restaurant" nominee, Girl & the Goat has been praised by high-profile publications such as *Saveur*, *New York Times*, *Food & Wine*, *Better Homes and Gardens* and others. Little Goat, Stephanie's highly successful follow-up to Girl & the Goat, encompasses a diner, coffee shop, bakery and bar. In March 2016, Stephanie opened her third restaurant, a Chinese concept called Duck Duck Goat in Chicago's West Loop neighborhood.

Shota Nakajima (Seattle, Washington)

Chef Shota Nakajima's point of view is influenced by his Japanese background, his mother's homemade cooking and his focus on ingredients from the Pacific Northwest. A Seattle native, 27-year-old Nakajima began cooking in area Japanese restaurants in his teens and fell in love with all aspects of restaurant life. At age 18, he moved to Osaka, Japan to learn the depth of his native culture and attend the prestigious Tsuji Culinary Arts School. Following graduation, he had the opportunity to apprentice under Michelin Star Chef Yasuhiko Sakamoto. When Nakajima returned to Seattle, he worked for Chef Taichi Kitamura at Sushi Kappo Tamura from 2011-12. In 2014, he opened his own catering business, Kappo Kitchen, and won the Seattle round of the World Washoku Challenge. Fans of his beautiful Japanese presentations were introduced to contemporary Kaiseki dining when he opened Naka Kaiseki and bar in June, 2015. In February, 2017, Naka Kaiseki was reborn as Adana restaurant and bar: Japanese comfort food experienced in Shota's three-course tasting menus and Japanese street food in the bar.

Jonathan Sawyer (Cleveland, Ohio)

Chef Jonathon Sawyer is a proud Clevelander and a graduate of the Pennsylvania Institute of Culinary Arts. He began his culinary career at The Biltmore Hotel in Miami before working in New York City alongside Charlie Palmer at Kitchen 22. Sawyer worked as Chef de Cuisine for Michael Symon, and then became Symon's Executive Chef at Parea, receiving a two star review from *The New York Times*. In 2007, Jonathon moved back to his hometown to pursue his dream of opening his own restaurant. Before his dream was realized, Sawyer partnered with a local entrepreneur to open Bar Cento, a modern Roman enoteca in Cleveland's Ohio City neighborhood. During his tenure as chef and partner, Bar Cento received many accolades, including *Northern Ohio Live's* "Best New Restaurant" and earned the "Rising Star Chef" award from both *Restaurant Hospitality* and *GAYOT*. Sawyer has since opened several of his own restaurants in Cleveland, including his flagship The Greenhouse Tavern, a French and seasonally inspired gastropub; Noodlecat, a quick service ramen shop focusing on local ingredients and sustainability; and Trentina, a northern Italian inspired restaurant that was named a runner up in *Esquire's* "Best New Restaurants" in October 2014. Sawyer also operates Sawyer's Street Frites in the Cleveland Browns Stadium, and opened another stadium establishment called SeeSaw Pretzel Shoppe in Quicken Loans Arena. He was honored as a recipient of *Food & Wine Magazine's* "Best New Chef" award in 2010. In 2013, he became a finalist for the James Beard Award's "Best Chef: Great Lakes," and won the prestigious award in 2015.

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