



IRON CHEF GAUNTLET **Chef Competitor Bios**

Timon Balloo (Miami, Florida)

Timon Balloo is the culinary heart of SUGARCANE raw bar grill, where he is Executive Chef and Partner. He draws from his broad range of influences and experiences to bring bold, global flavors to every dish on the menu. From his own Chinese, Indian-Trinidadian heritage to his classic European training, to the diverse kitchens in which he built his career, each step along the way has led Balloo to become the chef he is today. Through the international program of extended studies at Johnson & Wales, Balloo traveled to Belgium to work at Hotel Métropole in 1998. Under the French Master, Chef Dominique Michou, Balloo honed his classical culinary training skills. Balloo went on to become Junior Sous Chef at Azul in Miami's Mandarin Oriental Hotel under the leadership of Michelle Bernstein. From contemporary Spanish cuisine at La Broche in Miami to the intersection of Japanese, Brazilian and Peruvian dishes at SUSHISAMBA in New York City, Balloo eventually earned Executive Chef status. He partnered with Amir Ben-Zion to launch Domo Japones in Miami's Design District. An opportunity to reconnect with Samba Brands Management in 2009 brought Balloo back to the growing restaurant group as Executive Chef and Partner of SUGARCANE raw bar grill, which opened in 2010. It was here that he was able to bring together everything he had learned about global flavors and techniques. Shortly after the restaurant's debut, SUGARCANE raw bar grill was named a James Beard Awards semifinalist for "Best New Restaurant" and Balloo was dubbed "The People's Best New Chef" by Food and Wine.

Nicole Gomes (Calgary, Canada)

Crowned as Canada's Top Chef by Food Network's *Top Chef Canada: All-Stars*, a competition that pitched the best of four seasons of *Top Chef Canada*, Nicole Gomes fought her way to the champion spot to become the first female winner of Canada's prestigious high-stakes culinary competition. With over 20 years of professional experience and currently as chef owner of the highly successful Nicole Gourmet Catering, now in its eleventh year, Gomes has been intrigued by the kitchen from the very young age of 8. Her first exposure to professional cooking came during an apprenticeship at a Paris bistro. She has since cooked across the globe aside many accomplished chefs, notably in Sydney, Hong Kong, Vancouver's West, and Catch in Calgary before opening Mercato as Executive Chef, one of Calgary's top restaurants during her tenure. She also has travelled extensively as a guest chef including at the *James Beard House*, in New York City. As chef and owner of Nicole Gourmet Catering she has been recognized with several awards including Western Living's "Top 40 Foodies under 40" in 2013, Avenue Magazine's "Top 40 under 40" in 2014, Alberta Women's Entrepreneur nominee in 2014 and Calgary Herald's "Compelling Calgarians" in 2015. In 2016, Gomes partnered with her sister to open Cluck N' Cleaver, a crispy fried and French style rotisserie chicken take-out joint, priding itself on providing good food, fast. The highly successful, independently owned and operated business will soon be expanding in Calgary and across Western Canada. Gomes donates her time to a large number of charitable causes, such as Calgary Health Trust's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and a variety of food and children related organizations. No matter what Gomes is cooking from her large repertoire of culinary experience, this busy chef, caterer, entrepreneur and passionate media personality remains committed to innovative, personalized cuisine served with personality and flair. Nothing gives her more joy than sharing her craft by bringing people together to enjoy great food.

David LeFevre (Manhattan Beach, California)

David LeFevre is the chef-owner behind the critically acclaimed Southern California restaurants Manhattan Beach Post (M.B. Post), Fishing with Dynamite and The Arthur J. Educated at the renowned Culinary Institute of America, the Wisconsin native's expertise has been nurtured by time spent in the world's best kitchens, including ten years at Charlie Trotter's celebrated restaurants in Chicago and Las Vegas, and seven years at Water Grill in Los Angeles, where he received accolades for his mastery of seafood and earned a prized Michelin Star. LeFevre has traveled the globe immersing himself in diverse food cultures and amassing a library of techniques attained from experiences ranging from stages at La Côte d'Or and Restaurant Jean Bardet in France, to a two-year trek through Southeast Asia, Japan, Australia and the Caribbean. Since opening M.B. Post in 2011, LeFevre is a three-time James Beard "Best Chef" semi-finalist. M.B. Post, Fishing with Dynamite, and The Arthur J are a true reflection of LeFevre's roots, his travels, and his passion for preparing bold and playful, ingredient-driven dishes that are artisanal, soulful, and handcrafted.

Dale Mackay (Saskatoon, Canada)

Although he hails from a small town in Canada, Dale Mackay's career has taken him to some of the best kitchens in the world. He was the Executive Chef at Gordon Ramsay's Michelin-starred restaurants in London, Tokyo and New York, as well as Daniel Boulud's Lumiere in Vancouver. Now he owns four restaurants in his native Saskatoon, where he experiments with global cuisine and is single-handedly responsible for reinvigorating the city's food scene. Mackay's accolades include Maclean's Magazine's "Top 100 Restaurants in Canada" 2013-2017, Western Living "Foodie of the Year" 2014, Vacay.ca "Top Ten Best Restaurants" 2013, EnRoute Magazine "Best New Restaurant in Canada" 2013, AAA Five Diamond Award 2007, Traditions et Qualite Highest Honors 2007 and youngest chef to win Relais & Chateau Grand Chef in 2007. He is also the winner of *Top Chef Canada*'s first season.



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Jeanie Roland (Punta Gorda, Florida)

With her restaurants The Perfect Caper in Punta Gorda, Florida and Ella's Fine Food in Westerly, Rhode Island, and more than 25 years of experience in the kitchen, Jeanie Roland brings a culinary expertise and competitive energy to everything she does. She has more James Beard nominations than most chefs get in a lifetime, and recently went toe-to-toe against Bobby Flay on *Beat Bobby Flay*, where she won. Roland uses refined French technique and Asian influences to create unique cuisine that keeps patrons coming back over and over. She's a seven-time James Beard Foundation nominee for "Best Chef: South," eight-time Florida Trend Magazine "Golden Spoon Award" winner and lauded in Florida Trend Magazine's "Hall of Fame" 2016.

Hong Thaimée (New York, New York)

Originally from Chiang Mai, Thailand, Chef Hong Thaimée is one of the most visible faces of Thai food in the US. As chef/owner of three NYC restaurants, she brings her True Thai flavors to a broad New York audience. She is a celebrity chef/entrepreneur, humanitarian activist, inspirational speaker and ambassador for Thai food. Hong put aside a successful career as a model and corporate executive in Bangkok to come to New York with the goal of starting a Thai food company. With a business degree but little kitchen experience, she talked her way into cooking jobs at Jean-Georges' Spice Market and Perry Street restaurants, where she mastered classic technique for five years. She left Jean-Georges in 2012 to open Ngam and focus on the Thai flavors of her childhood. The place, now known as Thaimée Table, quickly caught on, and was ranked as the "Best Thai Food in NYC" by The Village Voice in 2013. With her own restaurant as a base, Hong grew substantial catering and education presences, all driven by her desire to serve people and spread the word about real Thai flavors. "True Thai," her 2015 cookbook with Rizzoli, captures many of those flavors. In 2017, she opened Thaimée Box, a fast-casual spot, and Thaimée Magic, a kiosk in Gansevoort Market, serving the Magic Noodles that took over social media and topped Zagat's "12 Instagram Dishes of the Year" list. Hong appears regularly in media and events around the world and competed against Bobby Flay on *Iron Chef America*. In 2018, she'll cook at James Beard House and the Culinary Institute of America.

Kevin Tien (Washington, DC)

Kevin got his start in the kitchen as a teen, working in his parents' restaurant. While his beginnings may be humble, he found his passion for cooking and went on to work with some of the best chefs in the country, including James Beard Award-winning Tyson Cole, Aaron Silverman, and Jose Andres. Last year, Kevin opened Himitsu and within just two months was nominated for a James Beard Award. His cuisine is Japanese-inspired, as well as infused with his Vietnamese heritage, creating loud, exciting flavors with expert technique. His accolades include 2017 & 2018 James Beard Foundation "Rising Star Chef" semi-finalist, 2017 Bon Appetit "Best Restaurants in America" Top 50 Finalist and 2017 Eater "12 Best New Restaurants in America", Eater DC Restaurant of the Year 2017.

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