

Hail to the Chef

OFF CAMERA, CELEBRITY CHEFS ARE SERVING UP UNFORGETTABLE MEALS AT THEIR OWN RESTAURANTS.

BY REBECA PICCARDO

They're on TV every week, demanding more caramelization on the *mirepoix* and less reduction on the rosemary-balsamic marinade. As judges for reality cooking competition shows, celebrity chefs entertain audiences with their critiques (and clever insults) while they challenge contestants in a professional kitchen. Their words carry weight. Many are already household names in the culinary world after years of honing their flawless techniques. And as the world's fascination with celebrity chefs skyrockets, one can't help but wonder what it would be like to savor one of their ingenious and carefully crafted recipes.

Here, we've rounded up our top celebrity chef restaurant picks in Interval resort vacation destinations. Having an exceptional meal created by your favorite as-seen-on-TV food genius can be as simple as calling ahead to reserve a table when planning your next trip.

Bazaar Mar, Bazaar Mar

MIAMI, FLORIDA

JOSÉ ANDRÉS: BAZAAR MAR

Famous for his inventive dishes using a technique called spherification (reshaping liquid into a semi-solidified sphere), the Spanish-American chef is widely recognized for bringing the small plates-dining concept to the U.S. Andrés owns a group of 26 restaurants around the world, including **Bazaar Mar**, which opened within the SLS Brickell Hotel & Residences at the end of 2016. Seafood takes center stage here, from the name and menu to the decor itself. The blue and white dining room is like a mythical seascape: A giant fish-head sculpture with horns is mounted behind the bar, tiles are decorated with designs depicting mermaids and half-lobster people, and golden crabs appear to crawl up the walls.

As Seen on TV: *Made in Spain, Iron Chef America, Top Chef*

Must Try: At Bazaar Mar, every plate is presented with a whimsical, sea-themed twist. Take the California "funnel cake," for example: a thin seaweed wafer topped with avocado, blue crab, tobiko (roe), mayo, and cucumber served on a silver octopus-shaped stand. Tapas are also featured, and include Maine lobster croquetas and the world-famous marinated "Ferran Adrià" liquid olives (if you want to see what spherification is first-hand). For dessert, order the Key lime pie "our way" — Key lime ice cream with a graham-cracker crumble in the shape of a sand castle, served with a lime foam.



SCOTT CONANT: SCARPETTA

Establishing himself as a chef by working in popular Manhattan Italian kitchens for nearly 30 years, the finicky TV judge eventually opened his own restaurants, which have consistently earned starred reviews and awards. One of his well-known outposts is **Scarpetta**, at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach hotel. Although Conant's menu items sound simple, his intricate cooking methods bring bold flavors out of the most basic ingredients. For one, he makes his pastas from scratch daily, and seasons them with herb-infused oils. And he doesn't cook them completely in boiling water — he finishes off by transferring them al dente to a pan of sauce, adjusting its thickness by adding pasta water from the pot.

As Seen on TV: *Chopped, Top Chef*

Must Try: Conant's creamy polenta is silky smooth and served with a fricassee of truffled mushrooms. His spaghetti with tomato and basil is a standout dish for the chef, who takes a meticulous approach to preparing a sauce that involves boiling, peeling, and deseeding fresh plum tomatoes before mashing them.



LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

GIADA DE LAURENTIIS: GIADA

This Food Network darling is best known for her laid-back charm, and always looking glamorous in the kitchen. Her shows and cookbooks pay homage to her Italian roots, as she demonstrates how to whip up easy-to-make versions of old family recipes. Although her cooking existed only in the TV



realm for many years, the Emmy Award-winning celebrity chef opened her first restaurant, **Giada**, inside The Cromwell hotel in 2014.

As Seen on TV: *Giada at Home, Everyday Italian, Food Network Star, Iron Chef America*

Must Try: Giada features Italian cuisine with California influences, bringing a lighter touch to classic dishes by incorporating vegetables or healthy ingredients (plenty of greens, herbs, and citrus). De Laurentiis' classics, such as her chicken cacciatore and rigatoni with vegetable Bolognese, are on the menu. One of the most popular plates is lemon spaghetti with shrimp and basil. The sauce is made by whisking together olive oil, Parmesan cheese, and lemon zest and juice. The dish is garnished with fried capers.

GORDON RAMSAY: HELL'S KITCHEN

TV's favorite explosive, foul-mouthed chef opened his newest restaurant **Hell's Kitchen**, the first-of-its-kind, at Caesars Palace this past winter. Inspired by Ramsay's high-stakes cooking competition show, the interior is designed in blue and red team sections, with the two busy kitchens as the centerpiece. Guests are smack in the middle of the action, as if participating on the show, and get to try the chef's recipes from the TV series, as well as some of Ramsay's specialties, such as crispy skin salmon and beef Wellington.



As Seen on TV: *Hell's Kitchen, MasterChef, MasterChef Junior, Kitchen Nightmares*

Must Try: Steak lovers *have* to order the beef Wellington, a traditional British dish made with seared filet mignon covered with Parma ham and duxelles (a mushroom paste), and baked inside a puff pastry. It's served sliced in half and accompanied with a red wine demi-glace. For something sweet, Ramsay's sticky toffee pudding with ice cream is legendary.

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

ALEX GUARNASCHELLI: BUTTER

You could say cooking was this Iron Chef's destiny: The daughter of a cookbook author, Guarnaschelli grew up kneading bread and tasting soufflés in her home kitchen. The classically trained chef worked in prestigious restaurants in New York and Paris before becoming the executive chef at **Butter**, located in midtown Manhattan. The upscale eatery features seasonal dishes, inspired by ingredients Guarnaschelli finds at Union Square Greenmarket.



As Seen on TV: *Iron Chef America, The Next Iron Chef, Chopped, Alex's Day Off*

Must Try: Butter serves a varied menu, from roasted Mexican street corn and avocado toast burrata to poached shrimp and steak tartare. One of the restaurant's signature desserts is raspberry beignets with a vanilla bean dipping sauce.

ANNE BURRELL: PHIL & ANNE'S GOOD TIME LOUNGE

The feisty, spiky-haired chef worked in restaurants in New York and Italy before her breakout Food Network appearance cooking as a sous-chef on *Iron Chef America*. Since then, she's been a network staple, hosting several hit shows and using her years of industry experience to inspire home cooks to become kitchen rock stars. And now, she's putting her food out there, with the opening of her own establishment in Brooklyn. The Mediterranean-Italian style restaurant and bar is a joint venture between Burrell and New York bar owner Phil Casaceli. The funky neighborhood hotspot, with metallic orange wallpaper and bright-green tufted banquettes, serves cocktails crafted by Casaceli and appetizer-sized dishes developed by Burrell.



B[U]Y THE BOOK

Make your own gourmet meal at home with easy-to-follow recipes penned by your favorite celebrity chefs, who reveal tips, tricks, and time-saving techniques. Here are a few noteworthy titles you'll want to keep on your kitchen counter:

Tapas: A Taste of Spain in America

José Andrés talks tapas, Spain's gift to the culinary world. Using simple Mediterranean ingredients, these little dishes are easy to make at home and fun to eat with friends and family.

Cook Like a Rock Star

Anne Burrell shares recipes and techniques to help home cooks gain confidence and ability in their own kitchens.

The Scarpetta Cookbook

Scott Conant walks you through more than 100 of his restaurant's signature dishes, from ingredient shopping and proper cooking methods to tips on entertaining guests at home.

Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course

Ramsay distills his expertise into this guide for home cooks, taking aspiring chefs all the way back to the basics (like how to properly chop an onion).

Old-School Comfort Food: The Way I Learned to Cook

Alex Guarnaschelli tells stories of her personal culinary journey, and shares recipes and some of her secrets to great home cooking.

As Seen on TV: *Iron Chef America, Worst Cooks in America, Secrets of a Restaurant Chef*

Must Try: The menu at **Phil & Anne's Good Time Lounge** is divided into light, medium, and heavy plates, and features recipes from Burrell's *Cook Like a Rock Star* cookbook, including dry-rubbed rib eye with potato bacon fontina cake, and braised chicken with mushrooms and almond puree.

NAPA, CALIFORNIA

MASAHARU MORIMOTO: MORIMOTO NAPA

The Iron Chef of Iron Chefs, Morimoto was one of the kitchen stadium's original resident chefs when *Iron Chef America*, a spinoff of a Japanese TV show, was launched. Off-screen, Morimoto worked at some of Manhattan's prestigious restaurants, including as head chef at Nobu, before opening his own eponymous eateries. His Napa outpost introduced the chef's signature high-end sushi and Japanese-fusion dishes (tuna pizza, anyone?) to the West Coast in 2010. The restaurant has an outdoor dining terrace overlooking the Napa River, and the area's only sake and Japanese whisky bar.

As Seen on TV: *Iron Chef, Iron Chef America, The Next Iron Chef*

Must Try: The contemporary Japanese menu includes just about everything, from pork, duck, and beef to fresh seafood and sushi. Try one of the more unique selections at **Morimoto Napa**, like sea urchin carbonara or duck meatball soup, or stick to one of the most popular offerings: toro (tuna belly) tartare, served on a washboard with a little rake and pads of wasabi, nori paste, sour cream, and sturgeon caviar.

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

RICK BAYLESS: FRONTERA GRILL AND TOPOLOBAMPO

The Oklahoma native began to specialize in authentic Mexican cuisine after living in Mexico with his wife while researching their first cookbook in the 1980s. When they returned to the U.S., the couple wanted to open a restaurant reminiscent of their travels. And so, in 1987, they founded the casual **Frontera Grill**, with colorful Mexican folk art hanging on the walls and mariachi music resonating in the dining room. Shortly after, Bayless and his wife opened the more upscale **Topolobampo** right next door, in the River North neighborhood. The side-by-side eateries share an entrance, but Topolobampo's menu is more inventive and refined than its sister establishment.



As Seen on TV: *Mexico: One Plate at a Time, Iron Chef America, Top Chef Masters*

On the Menu: Frontera Grill highlights authentic dishes and flavors — from ceviche and enchiladas to moles and tacos — made with fresh ingredients from local farms (they even list their sources on the menu). At Topolobampo, guests can choose between three tasting options (two five-course and one seven-course). The items — such as rabbit with a sauce made from the fermented Mexican beverage *pulque*,

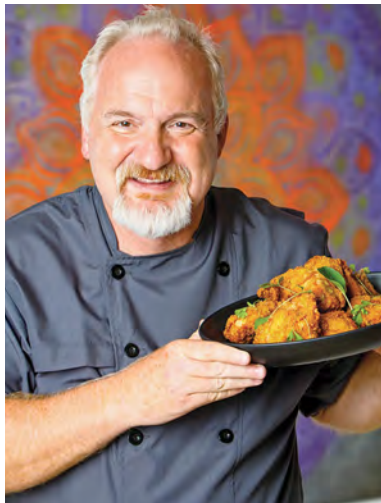


TORO TARTARE

as well as a creamy avocado sorbet with cherry-tomatillo salsa — mix tastes, textures, and sauces.

ART SMITH: BLUE DOOR KITCHEN & GARDEN

Art Smith spent much of his career cooking as the personal chef to Oprah Winfrey and two Florida governors before starting his own Southern-themed restaurants. His appearances on TV shows and numerous food festivals around the world also launched him into superstardom. Although his fried chicken made him famous, Smith decided to shift the focus from Southern comfort food to a farm-to-table concept at his Gold Coast restaurant, which reflects Smith's own lifestyle changes to improve his health over the past few years.



As Seen on TV: *Iron Chef America, Top Chef, Top Chef Masters, Chopped*

Must Try: Seasonal ingredients dictate the menu at **Blue Door Kitchen & Garden**, and popular options include the Brussels sprouts and kale salad, with toasted almonds, Parmesan cheese, bacon, and maple tahini vinaigrette; and the organic salmon served with rutabaga latkes, Brussels sprouts, creme fraiche, and apples. Two of Smith's specialty dishes are a nod to his old favorites: buttermilk fried chicken with garlic mashed potatoes, and shrimp and grits with andouille sausage and tomato stew. ■

Splash News/Alamy Stock Photo; Morimoto Napa; Blue Door Kitchen