

Wolfgang Puck of 'Top Chef: Seattle' Says Taste Is the Most Important Part of Cooking for Your Loved Ones



By Whitney Baker

Fans of reality television will recognize world-renowned chef and restaurateur Wolfgang Puck. Not only was he responsible for the food served at the infamous wedding of Kim Kardashian and Kris Humphries (filmed for 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians'), but he has also appeared as a guest judge on previous seasons of 'Top Chef: Las Vegas' and 'Top Chef: New York.' And now, Puck is excited to join the tenth season of the cooking-competition series in Seattle as a permanent judge alongside Tom Colicchio, Gail Simmons, Hugh Acheson and longtime friend Emeril Lagasse with Padma Lakshmi returning as host.

This season of 'Top Chef: Seattle,' which premieres on Wednesday, November 7th at 10 p.m. EST on Bravo, focuses on the contestants going back to the basics, something that Puck considers incredibly important when cooking. "I really believe that cooking to learn the foundation is the most important part," he shares.

As for this season's 21 chef'testants, Puck says, "I saw that there were a lot of talented people who did great dishes, but a lot of them also lacked fundamentals."

Having a strong foundation of cooking skills can also come in handy when preparing a dish for your significant other. When cooking a meal for your partner for the first time, Puck recommends preparing something you feel confident cooking, "not something completely new where you are unsure of how many minutes you have to cook it or if the seasoning tastes good or if the combinations of spices and herbs are just right." Additionally, it's important to buy the best quality ingredients and to keep it simple.

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Now that you've chosen the right ingredients and a simple recipe that you know how to cook, how do you know if what

you've prepared is a hit or a miss? "I tell all of my young chefs – and everybody in the kitchen – that the most important thing for a chef is to taste," Puck explains.

Another cooking lesson that ranks high in Puck's opinion? Learning from your loved ones. After all, the chef began cooking professionally at age 14, and before that, he spent time in the kitchen with his mother, who was a chef in the Austrian town where Puck was born.

Growing up, Puck's mother followed the farm-to-table ideology that is sweeping across America's restaurants, and as the chef shares, it was totally logical at the time. "You know, we went outside into the garden, picked the vegetables and made a vegetable soup" – a statement that reiterates the high importance that Puck places on knowing basic skills in the kitchen!

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Of course, Puck has come a long way since then, having changed the way Americans approach the art of cooking by combining classic French and Asian techniques. Though he's sitting at the judges' table now, Puck can't help but look back and consider how a young Wolfgang would've done on 'Top Chef': "I think I would have done pretty well because I always had good instincts about food, and I was always very clear about using great ingredients."

Even so, the playing field was quite different when he first entered the scene. "At that time, you didn't have as many talented young chefs who worked really hard and were really good at it."

Considering the changing culinary landscape, none of this season's contestants reminded Puck of a younger version of himself; however, that's not to say that they didn't impress him. Offering a glimpse at the upcoming season, he shares, "There are a few contestants who actually had their own ways.

You know, there are so many chefs who can execute great recipes, but there are very few who actually have their own ideas for those great recipes.”

“When somebody is a ‘Top Chef’ winner, you almost expect them to have their own ways and their own ideas – and then execute them perfectly,” he adds.

Be sure to tune in to this season of ‘Top Chef: Seattle,’ which premieres on Bravo on Wednesday, November 7th at 10 p.m. EST. For more information about Wolfgang Puck, you can visit his official site at www.WolfgangPuck.com.