



Meet the Judges



Rick Bayless

Though many people know **Rick Bayless** as the winner of Bravo's *Top Chef Masters*, his highly rated public television series, *Mexico–One Plate at a Time*, is seen on Create TV and local public television stations nationwide and has earned him multiple Daytime Emmy nominations for Best Culinary Host.

Rick has nine cookbooks. His second book, *Mexican Kitchen*, won the Julia Child IACP cookbook of the year award in 1996, and his fourth book, *Mexico–One Plate at a Time* won James Beard Best International Cookbook of the Year award in 2001. *Fiesta at Rick's* spent a number of weeks on the *New York Times* best seller list.

Rick's side by side restaurants in Chicago have received the James Beard Foundation's prestigious Outstanding Restaurant Award: Frontera Grill earned the award in 2007; next-door Topolobampo earned the award in 2017. His additional restaurants can be found throughout Chicagoland, including Chicago's "Restaurant Row" on Randolph Street and in O'Hare International Airport. His latest, Frontera Cocina, opened in 2016 in Disney Springs.

Rick has received numerous *James Beard Foundation Award* nominations in many categories, and has won seven: Midwest Chef of the Year, National Chef of the Year, Humanitarian of the Year, Who's Who of American Food and Drink, Best Podcast, plus two for his cookbooks. The Government of Mexico has bestowed the *Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle* upon Rick—the highest decoration bestowed on foreigners whose work has benefitted Mexico and its people. In 2016, he earned the *Julia Child Foundation Award*, a prestigious honor given to "an individual who has made a profound and significant impact on the way America cooks, eats and drinks."

Rick leads the *Frontera Farmer Foundation* to support small Midwestern farms. Each year, grants are awarded to farmers for capital improvements to their family farms. To date, nearly 200 grants totaling nearly \$2 million have been awarded. In 2007, Bayless and his team launched the *Frontera Scholarship*, a full tuition scholarship that sends a Mexican-American Chicago Public School student to Kendall College to study culinary arts. In 2007 Rick was awarded the Humanitarian of the Year by the International Association of Culinary Professionals for his many philanthropic endeavors.



Ellie Krieger

Host and executive producer of the cooking series *Ellie's Real Good Food* on public television, and well known from her hit Food Network show *Healthy Appetite*, **Ellie Krieger** is a leading go-to nutritionist in the media today, helping people find the sweet spot where "delicious" and "healthy" meet. Krieger's success can be attributed to her accessible way of offering tools for nurturing a richly satisfying, sumptuous lifestyle while cutting through the gimmicks, hype and extreme eating that permeate our world.

She is a *New York Times* bestselling, IACP and two-time *James Beard Foundation Award* winning author of six cookbooks and she is a weekly columnist for *The Washington Post*. She has also been a columnist for *Fine Cooking*, *Food Network* magazine and *USA Today*.

Ellie is a registered dietitian nutritionist who earned her bachelors in clinical nutrition from Cornell University and her masters in nutrition education from Teacher's College Columbia University. Her latest book is *You Have it Made: Delicious, Healthy Do-Ahead Meals* (Jan 2016). She finds happiness living with her husband and daughter in New York City.



Kevin Belton

Kevin Belton is a gumbo of English, French, Native American and African ancestry. His mother's family has roots in the French-Caribbean island of Martinique and his French-speaking father's family came from South Louisiana, near Thibodaux. The self-trained chef began cooking under the watchful eye of his mother and grandmother. From these talented home cooks, Belton learned to prepare the venerable dishes of the city and in his first series he shared family recipes and personal tips for making seafood gumbo, pralines, shrimp remoulade and many other New Orleans specialties.

Cooking instruction is second nature for Belton, who has spent almost 30 years teaching the foundation of Louisiana cooking. Belton has also offered classes and cooking demonstrations throughout the U.S. and Canada. He has been a featured chef and guest on numerous food programs including *Emeril Live*; *Ready Set Cook*; *Life, Love, and Lunch*; *Food Fighters*; and *Taste of America*. In 1999, he was co-host and chef on the BBC series *Big Kevin, Little Kevin*, which also featured British celebrity chef Kevin Woodford.

In 2014, he became the resident chef for the CBS affiliate WWL's morning show. He is also doing a series of segments titled "Today's Special".

In 2014, he was recognized as one of the top twenty Louisiana chefs and in 2018, Belton was also named a Culinary Legend by the American Culinary Federation.

Belton has long been associated with WYES-TV as the host of several cooking marathons. He is also a past recipient of the WYES President's Award.

Taped at the WYES-TV studios, *New Orleans Cooking with Kevin Belton* gives viewers a chance to meet a new APT host whose big personality matches his 6' 9" frame. Kevin just completed filming his second series with WYES, *Kevin Belton's New Orleans Kitchen* as well as the companion book.



Joanne Weir

Awarded the first IACP Julia Child Cooking Teacher Award of Excellence, **Joanne Weir** shares a lifetime of experience that flavors everything she touches. Her first book, *From Tapas to Meze* (Crown, 1994,) was nominated for a James Beard Award and selected by Julia Child as one of her 12 personal favorites out of 1000 cookbooks published that year. A completely revised version of *From Tapas to Meze* (Ten Speed Press, 2004) was re-released with spectacular food photographs and won the 2004 *Gourmand World Cookbook Award* for Best Mediterranean Cookbook.

Joanne has published more than 17 books— including *Joanne Weir's Cooking Confidence: Dinner Made Simple* (Taunton Press, 2012) winning some of the culinary industry's most coveted awards, too many to mention! She brought her cooking experience to life in 1999 in the public television series *Weir Cooking in the Wine Country*, shot on location in the Napa Valley. The companion book, *Weir's More Cooking in the Wine Country* (Simon & Schuster, 2001) went on to garner a *James Beard Foundation Award* nomination and an IACP Cookbook Award nomination.

Since then, Joanne has hosted a number of public television series. Her newest, titled *Joanne Weir's Plates and Places*, premieres in February, 2018. She spends six months of the year touring the globe sharing her extensive background with regard to food theory and technique, in particular Mediterranean cuisine and the regional foods of the U.S. All these elements come alive in her thoughtful classes as well as her delightful words and many public television series seen on Create and local public television stations nationwide.



Buki Elegbede

The Create Cooking Challenge's 2017 Grand Prize Winner, 28-year-old **Buki Elegbede**, has long been interested in bringing his passion for food to television. Growing up in a home with parents who believed the entire family participated in food preparation, Buki learned his way around the kitchen early. Though he was born in Manhattan, Buki's parents came from Nigeria, where, when hungry, everyone goes to the kitchen and gets cooking! Primarily a self-taught cook, Buki wowed the Create Cooking Challenge Final Judges with his energy, enthusiasm, presentation skills and baking knowledge. He can't wait to share more! The Grand Prize included a cash prize as well as production equipment to finance the completion of a web series. This series consists of 10 webisodes, premiering on CreateTV.com, where visitors will also find the Create Cooking Challenge 2016 winner's series, *Isobe Food*, and other top winners' videos.

Raised in New Jersey, Buki is a Journalism graduate of Rutgers University with a keen interest in getting in front of the camera. His resume includes commercial television production, so he understands what goes on behind the scenes. Buki has been a fan of cooking shows and Create TV since it started 13 years ago! Although his "daytime" position is in commercial television production, Buki loves spending his spare time filling special baking requests for his small business, Baked by Buki. He draws upon his parents' Nigerian influence in some of his cooking – especially when it comes to adding spices.