

First sign of spring: Food Network's seasonal baking competition is back

By **Andrew Warren**
TV Media

Spring is in the air! For those of us who live in more northerly climes — you know, those places that have spent the past few months buried under several feet of snow — it's an exciting time with longer days, returning birds and melting snow, but even folks in the balmy south get the pleasure of one particular sign of the season: the return of "Spring Baking Championship."

The Food Network series, which premieres Monday, March 18, always blooms at this time of year, and it's kind of a big deal. The show, along with the network's other seasonal competitions, is a huge ratings hit, and last season

it attracted the biggest audiences in its history.

Spring is all about renewal, and this year's "Spring Baking Championship" takes that to heart by welcoming a new host. Fashion consultant and former "The Chew" presenter Clinton Kelly takes the position this year, taking over from "Cheap Eats" host Ali Khan. At the judges' table things are more familiar, with Nancy Fuller, Duff Goldman and Lorraine Pascale returning to the positions that they've held since the very first season.

Ten bakers enter the kitchen in this week's premiere, and for their first challenge, they're tasked with making sumptuous spring animal-themed doughnuts. Then, once the judges have had their first taste of what the competitors are capable of, the bakers are

asked to bring out their inner artists to make and decorate gorgeous watercolor cakes featuring scenes of iconic spring fruits and vegetables.

Sadly, this is a competition, and only one baker can ultimately win the title of Spring Baking Champion. At the end of the episode, the worst-performing baker is sent packing by the judges, but the relief is short-lived for the remaining competitors. Throughout the competition, they are asked to bake ribbon-worthy rhubarb pies, make marshmallow desserts for Easter and even participate in a tart-filled spelling bee.

Spring really is in the air, and the air has the scent of delicious baked goodies. "Spring Baking Championship" premieres Monday, March 18, on Food Network.



Host Clinton Kelly with "Spring Baking Championship" contestants

cooking this week

WEDNESDAY

2:00 p.m.

FOOD Family Food Showdown An Italian family takes on a Filipino-American family. (CC)

3:00 p.m.

KVEW The Rachael Ray Show (CC)
FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Talented young chefs put their skills to the test. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Guy's Grocery Games The chefs make an innovative dinner. (CC)

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Four chefs must use peanut butter in their pizzas. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Guy's Grocery Games The chefs prepare a lunch under a \$10 budget. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Four chefs compete in a pizza playoff. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Two sandwich masters square off. (CC)

THURSDAY

2:00 p.m.

FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Steven McHugh goes head-to-head with Brian Young. (CC)

2:30 p.m.

FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Chefs Anne Burrell and Scott Conant decide who reigns. (CC)

3:00 p.m.

KVEW The Rachael Ray Show (CC)
FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Jordan Andino is out to prove he's come a long way. (CC)

3:30 p.m.

FOOD Beat Bobby Flay The Iron Chef will step into the arena again. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Alex Guarnaschelli and Michael Symon join forces. (CC)

4:30 p.m.

FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Alex and Alton have their eye on the prize. (CC)

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Line Pelletier & Chris Scott try to school each other. (CC)

5:30 p.m.

FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Two East coast chefs duke it out in the kitchen. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Beat Bobby Flay (CC)

6:30 p.m.

FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Alton Brown and Jet Tila judge. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped The competitors face off in a protein-packed battle. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped The butchers direct their cleavers at cuts of pork. (CC)

FRIDAY

2:00 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy visits a hoagie shop in Hollywood. (CC)

2:30 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy samples pulled pork sandwiches in Memphis. (CC)

3:00 p.m.

KVEW The Rachael Ray Show (CC)

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy samples great food in Houston, TX. (CC)

3:30 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy looks at burgers four cities in America. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy makes unique pizzas in Boulder, Colorado. (CC)

4:30 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Home cooking and homebrew in one meal. (CC)

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy looks for timeless traditions like bayou crawfish. (CC)

5:30 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy finds a slice of history all over the country. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy hits up some joints that are authentic to the bone. (CC)

6:30 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy is heading to unique grills on the mainland. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy goes coast-to-coast for decadent dishes. (CC)

7:30 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy's taste buds are in for a culinary adventure. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives An L.A. spot fills bowls with eclectic eats. (CC)

SATURDAY

2:00 p.m.

FOOD Buddy vs. Duff Buddy and Duff make family recipes. (CC)

3:00 p.m.

KTNW America's Test Kitchen From Cook's Illustrated (CC)

FOOD Winner Cake All Bakers make their best animal cake decorations. (CC)

3:30 p.m.

KTNW A Chef's Life Follow Vivian on her first trip to Feast Portland. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship Ten bakers create fruity mini cheesecakes. (CC)

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship The bakers must create cupcake flower arrangements. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship Eight bakers work to create mini-pies and desserts. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship The bakers take on springtime eclairs. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship The bakers create tiny berry-themed desserts. (CC)

SUNDAY

2:00 p.m.

FOOD Kids Baking Championship: Extra Icing Bakers make cakes using bake sale items. (CC)

3:00 p.m.

FOOD Buddy vs. Duff Buddy and Duff make family recipes. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy is celebrating southern home cooking. (CC)

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Dinners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy is traveling the country for local hot spots. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Five masters of protein battle for protein supremacy. (CC)

6:30 p.m.

KVEW Chance of Wine (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Guy Fieri puts competitors through cheesy combat. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Family Food Showdown (N) The Santana family takes on the Harris family.

MONDAY

2:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship The bakers must create cupcake flower arrangements. (CC)

3:00 p.m.

KVEW The Rachael Ray Show (CC)
FOOD Spring Baking Championship Eight bakers work to create mini-pies and desserts. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship The bakers take on springtime eclairs. (CC)

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship The bakers create tiny berry-themed desserts. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship Desserts are made using agave as the sweetener. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship The bakers must use avocado in a dessert creation. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Spring Baking Championship (CC)

TUESDAY

2:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped Junior (CC)

3:00 p.m.

KVEW The Rachael Ray Show (CC)
FOOD Chopped Alton challenges the chefs to use smoky infusions. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped Alton challenges the chefs to work with dehydration. (CC)

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped Alton has the chefs explore molecular gastronomy. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped The chefs are challenged by transparent ravioli. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped A fish and condiment puzzle Challenge champions. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped The chef's make pizza. (CC)

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