

Cooking curiosity: 'Chopped Junior' contestants check out what's in the baskets

By Andrew Warren
TV Media

Kids love surprises! I think it's all part of the curiosity of youth, the need that kids have to always be exploring. To paraphrase a favorite kids cartoon character, it's all about taking chances, making mistakes and getting messy.

That's probably why the competitors in "Chopped Junior" tend to do so well with those mysterious basket ingredients that "Chopped" is so famous for. A new season of the pint-sized competition gets underway Tuesday, June 25, on Food Network, with a bunch of new baskets and a group of new competitors ready to tackle them head-on.

Ted Allen hosts each episode as four contestants between

the ages of 9 and 15 enter the "Chopped" kitchen eager to see what ingredients are hidden inside of the iconic baskets. These aren't your run-of-the-mill kids, though: they're all maestros in the kitchen, with palates and skills far ahead of what most of their peers can boast.

Besides the age of the contestants, the competition is more or less classic "Chopped." In each round, the contestants are each given a basket containing four mystery ingredients, each of which must be featured in their dish. Once time runs out, the plates are presented to a panel of judges, who then rate the dishes based on taste, presentation, creativity and use of the basket ingredients before chopping one of the contestants and sending him or her packing.

Of course, while the contestants in "Chopped Junior" may be skilled, they're still amateurs and a far cry from the professional chefs that compete in the regular "Chopped." While the judges' standards are definitely high, they do pull their punches a bit more than they do in the adult version — after all, you can't expect a 9-year-old to have the same level of expertise as a culinary school grad!

What the kids do have, though, is way more experience and skill in the kitchen than a lot of adults do, and watching their faces light up with curiosity, joy, confusion and terror when they crack open those baskets and see what's inside is a delight to behold. The latest season of "Chopped Junior" premieres Tuesday, June 25, on Food Network.



Ted Allen hosts "Chopped Junior"

cooking this week

WEDNESDAY

- 3:00 p.m.**
KVEW The Rachael Ray Show (CC)
- FOOD Guy's Grocery Games** Four rising star chefs compete for big bucks. (CC)
- 4:00 p.m.**
FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Three pairs of twins team up. (CC)
- 5:00 p.m.**
FOOD Guy's Grocery Games A slot machine determines dinner ingredients. (CC)
- 6:00 p.m.**
FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Chefs getting married try to earn some cash. (CC)
- 7:00 p.m.**
FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Four chefs must try to make their signature dish. (CC)
- 8:00 p.m.**
FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Four of the best young chefs seek to make their mark. (CC)

THURSDAY

- 3:00 p.m.**
KVEW The Rachael Ray Show (CC)
- FOOD Beat Bobby Flay** Singapore and Long Island meet before Bobby. (CC)
- 3:30 p.m.**
FOOD Beat Bobby Flay A new school versus old school showdown. (CC)
- 4:00 p.m.**
FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Katie Lee and Laura Vitale hope to kill Bobby's record. (CC)
- 4:30 p.m.**
FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Two chefs try to break their own losing streaks. (CC)
- 5:00 p.m.**
FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Bobby's protégée Leia Gaccione has a surprise in store. (CC)
- 5:30 p.m.**
FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Martin Rios and Geoff Johnson hope for an edge. (CC)
- 6:00 p.m.**
FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Ryan Hackney and Nora Haron try to beat Bobby. (CC)
- 6:30 p.m.**
FOOD Beat Bobby Flay Cody and Sam Caroll prove love is a battlefield. (CC)
- 7:00 p.m.**
FOOD Chopped The competitors face four separate mystery ingredients. (CC)
- 8:00 p.m.**
FOOD Chopped The chefs must make ice cream work with halibut. (CC)

FRIDAY

- 3:00 p.m.**
KVEW The Rachael Ray Show (CC)
- FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives** Guy visits viewers' recommended restaurants. (CC)
- 3:30 p.m.**
FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy chases down some funky joints. (CC)
- 4:00 p.m.**
FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy's heading out for some family cooking in Minnesota. (CC)
- 4:30 p.m.**
FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives A 1920's candy and ice cream place. (CC)
- 5:00 p.m.**
FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy travels to find feel good food.

5:30 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy goes to an authentic Cuban joint in Chicago. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Oahu's Hawaiian dishes; Sicilian sandwiches in Chicago. (CC)

6:30 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy fills up with stuffed specialties in Massachusetts. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy visits the San Francisco coast. (CC)

7:30 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Local faves in Kansas City, Mo. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy starts this trip in Cincinnati at a Jamaican joint. (CC)

SATURDAY

1:00 p.m.

OPB Steven Raichlen's Project Fire American barbecue meets authentic ethnic grilling. (CC)

FOOD Wedding Cake Championship The teams make toppers that pay homage to dating. (CC)

1:30 p.m.

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

2:00 p.m.

OPB Annabel Langbein: The Free Range Cook Annabel combines lavender and merino lamb. (CC)

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy hits up a diverse roster of Vegas joints. (CC)

2:30 p.m.

OPB Martha Bakes Use the crunch and flavor of seeds. (CC)

3:00 p.m.

KTNW America's Test Kitchen From Cook's Illustrated The secrets to making the perfect Pane Francese. (CC)

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy's hittin' up all sorts of favorites of Flavortown. (CC)

3:30 p.m.

KTNW A Chef's Life Vivian prepares a Feast of the Seven Fishes dinner. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy's cruising the East Coast for classic joints.

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy's in the kitchen with real Triple-D all-stars. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

OPB The Great British Baking Show The Showstopper is a mighty layered meringue. (CC)

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives An exclusive peek at the lost footage of DDD. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

KTNW The Great British Baking Show Mary and Paul show their signature sponge puddings. (CC)

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Late night joints with great food at all hours. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy Fieri zeroes in on Chico, California. (CC)

SUNDAY

1:00 p.m.

FOOD The Kitchen The Kitchen prepares a week's worth of easy meals. (CC)

2:00 p.m.

FOOD The Kitchen The Kitchen welcomes the flavors of summer. (CC)

3:00 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy Fieri's bringin' the heat. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy's going coastal for the best eats on the beach. (CC)

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives Guy's soaking in the sunshine and grabbing some grub. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD The Great Food Truck Race The teams are mandated to sell classic Carolina BBQ. (CC)

6:30 p.m.

KVEW Chance of Wine (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Four chefs compete in Guy's summer games. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Guy's Grocery Games Four island-born chefs are challenged by Guy Fieri. (CC)

MONDAY

3:00 p.m.

KVEW The Rachael Ray Show (CC)
FOOD Best Baker in America: Extra Icing Bakers must make perfect mini princess cakes.

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Best Baker in America: Extra Icing This challenge is all about molten lava cakes.

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Best Baker in America: Extra Icing Flaming bombe Alaska awaits the seven remaining bakers. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Best Baker in America: Extra Icing The bakers recreate the classic eclair. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Best Baker in America: Extra Icing The bakers start making Toy Story-themed mini desserts. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Best Baker in America: Extra Icing (N) The bakers are challenged to make miniature pastries. (CC)

TUESDAY

3:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped Junior In the dessert round, a hybrid fruit. (CC)

4:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped Sixteen chefs are fired up to grill. (CC)

5:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped The grill masters are given a seafood-heavy basket. (CC)

6:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped The grill masters pound away in the first round. (CC)

7:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped A new group of furiously compete for the final spot. (CC)

8:00 p.m.

FOOD Chopped Four champion grill masters return! (CC)

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