

**tasty tv**

BY GEORGE DICKIE

## Ali Khan embraces the culinary experiences on 'Spring Baking Championship'

It stands to reason that if you're a judge on "Spring Baking Championship," you need to have an adventurous palate.

After all, the confections you're sampling may not be to your liking or within your comfort zone but you do have to be open to the experience.

Same holds true for the host. While Ali Khan ("Cheap Eats") isn't rendering a judgment on the confections created by contestants on the show, he does try everything. And says he's the better foodie for it.

"What's interesting with being a part of this show, and really any food show," he explains, "is trying things that you would never actually order. So things that involve fruit and things like that, I'd be like, 'I don't want that. I don't want oatmeal raisin fruitcake. That sounds like a horrible idea.' But you are on this show and the smell of butter, I can get over my whole chocolate crutch right there. ... it's really fun to try things that I would never order on my own."

As the competition series opens its seventh season with a fresh batch of 10 episodes Monday, Feb. 22, on Food Network, Kardea Brown ("Delicious Miss Brown") joins the judging panel with Duff Goldman and Nancy Fuller as 11 talented professional and home bakers from across the country take on two rounds of spring-themed baking challenges for a shot at a \$25,000

grand prize and a spot in Food Network Magazine.

In Monday's two-hour opener, the competitors are tasked with creating farm stand-inspired breakfast treats, followed by a dessert challenge that celebrates happy, dancing cows.

For his part, Khan is a fly on the wall as he listens to Brown, Fuller and Goldman deliberate on the strengths and problems with every dish. He frequently finds himself blown away by how these seasoned pros can analyze and pick apart a contestant's creation. Goldman's skills, in particular, leave him agog.

"I think we called him 'Professor Duff' more than once when we'd introduce him as a judge," Khan says. "And I think that just reflects the fact that he's a classically trained chef, his years of experience in the art of pastry is very, very obvious. And I think ultimately when you have people who really, really understand this, they can break down, when they taste something, certainly where something goes wrong."

"I watched Amanda Freitag break down why a sauce tastes like Olive Garden sauce to me when I was a judge on 'Chopped,'" he continues. "I was like, 'This tastes like Olive Garden.' She goes, 'He didn't cook the wine enough ... so you're tasting the alcohol.' I'm like, 'Oh my God, that's what that is.' Duff very much still holds that role."



Ali Khan

**celebrity q&a**

## Elisabeth Rohm

OF 'GIRL IN THE BASEMENT' ON LIFETIME

**After all the acting you've done, "Girl in the Basement" is your first credit as a director. How did it come your way?**

I've wanted to direct for a really long time. It's traditionally a man's role ... but after being on so many sets and watching things as they unfold, you finally get the courage to say, "Well, why not me? I'm ready for this."

Thankfully, I had an inspiration in ("Grey's Anatomy" co-star) Kim Raver, who produced a movie I starred in and said, "You should ask (Lifetime original-movie executive) Tanya Lopez, because she wants to be supportive in that way." So I did, and she made it happen, and she gave me a film that I truly wanted to direct. It wasn't just any movie, but something I was very passionate about.



BY JAY BOBBIN

## WebLinks

Marking the 30th anniversary of the pair's original television debut, Tim Allen and Richard Karn return to the shop as hosts of a competition series where makers from across the country go head-to-head to create mind-blowing builds in "Assembly Required," Tuesday on History. Catch a

preview at [www.youtube.com/watch?v\\_DbPHRaS1XY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v_DbPHRaS1XY)

Now a single mother of three trying to get her life back on track, Punky (Soleil Moon Frye) meets a young girl who reminds her a lot of her younger self, as "Punky Brewster," a new continuation of the popular 1980s sitcom, drops Thursday on Peacock. Get your first look at [www.youtube.com/watch?v43E2ONFNYQE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v43E2ONFNYQE)

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