

tastytv

BY GEORGE DICKIE

Food Network's 'Grill of Victory' puts barbecuers' creativity to the test

The gas grill can be one of the most versatile tools in a cook's toolbox, as viewers of an upcoming Food Network competition series will soon learn.

In "Grill of Victory," premiering Monday, June 21, home cooks with a passion for food prepared over flame are tasked with preparing breakfast, lunch, dinner and even dessert on their grills over the course of three rounds. The winner at the end of the six hourlong episodes, as determined by a rotating panel of judges including Susie Bulloch, Tregaye Fraser, Darnell Ferguson and Christian Petroni, wins a custom-built backyard kitchen.

So not only are standards like steak, chicken and seafood on the barbecue menu, but there are also unlikely items such as pizza, banana splits and even a Shepherd's pie as contestants used their grills for functions like baking and smoking.

Sabin Lomac ("Seaside Snacks & Shacks"), the show's host, was impressed by the contestants' outside-the-box thinking.

"We had people putting in wood chips to create the elements of smokers," he explains. "You know, we obviously had people using their saute pans on the side of the grill to make side dishes and really round out the meal. Some people, the contestants, their use of the pantry and just getting outside of their comfort zone."

There were nerves all around as the cooks grappled with the jitters in the early rounds and the judges locked horns over the different dishes, a nacho cheese hot dog being a particular bone of contention. But Lomac says the successful chefs were the ones who took the judges' criticism well and listened to their advice.

"I really remember a couple of the contestants," he says, "first

round maybe didn't go their way, the second round got a little better, and by the third round I think the nerves were gone and they just said, 'I'm gonna go win this.' And a lot of times, we just said, 'Take your time. Compose yourself. Think about what you want to do before you start running and scrambling.' And I think they actually did that. And so in the end, you looked at a really well-composed, rounded dish."

But this being a grilling competition, the final product needed to look and taste like it was prepared on a grill.

"A lot of times," Lomac says, "we were also saying, 'We need to be reminded that this was cooked on a barbecue, so don't forget the char, don't forget the smoke. Don't forget we kind of like that. You know, we like having chicken with some burnt edges. It doesn't need to be so pretty all the time.'"



Sabin Lomac

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