

# Heartland Chef



## Michael Symon serves North Coast cuisine

BY STEVE MOSCO

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Anyone that harbors a deeply rooted affinity for all things edible surely knows the name Michael Symon. The Cleveland-based chef is an unabashed carnivore and frequently appears on food-tilted television programs on The Food Network and ABC's *The Chew*. An Iron Chef, James Beard Foundation

Award-winner, author and honorary Long Islander, Symon has seared his grill marks deep into all facets of the food industry.

It's an industry Symon said he was drawn into while growing up surrounded by boisterous characters bound by the love cooked up in family meals.

"It was loud, very loud," Symon said of growing up in a Greek and Sicilian household. "When my friends came over they thought everyone was screaming, when everyone was just talking. Food was a huge part of our day-to-day life, and there were always more people at the table than our immediate family."

The chef with the infectious laugh took that celebration and turned it into a career, netting his first restaurant job at 13, prepping dishes and doing plenty of kitchen grunt work, the types of tasks that build character in a young chef—crucial components that Symon believes are necessary ingredients to success.

"It teaches you the lessons of the kitchen and how you need to respect every person in it, and that's what makes the kitchen work properly," he said. "The dishwasher is still the hardest job in the kitchen."

Symon's toiling paid off, and the chef now runs an array of



Chef Michael Symon cooks on *The Chew* (top left, photo by Lorenzo Bevilacqua/ABC), creates meat dreams at his restaurants including Mabel's (top right, photo source Facebook) and believes in BlueStar kitchen products (above).

restaurants including downtown Cleveland's Lola Bistro, B Spot Burgers in Ohio and Michigan, Roast in Detroit, Bar Symon in Pittsburgh and Washington Dulles International Airports, Symon's Burger Joint in Austin, TX, the coming-soon Angeline in Atlantic City, NJ, and his newest creation, Mabel's BBQ in Cleveland.

"You always love your first-born and newest best, so currently, my two favorites are Lola and Mabel's—but I love them all," he said. For Symon, Mabel's is a celebration of the Cleveland food scene—an all-too-often overlooked bastion of meat and

produce.

"Outsiders would find it surprising that Cleveland's been farm-to-table long before farm-to-table was cool," he said.

At home, Symon is a proponent of BlueStar kitchen products ([www.bluestarcooking.com](http://www.bluestarcooking.com)).

"It's the first home-kitchen equipment I've ever cooked on that's exactly like cooking at a restaurant, from the power to the space in the ovens," he said. "I can put a whole sheet tray in a home oven—it's a game changer for me."

And when cooking at home, Symon can't deny his favorites—burgers, barbecue and Italian food. But if he had to pick a last meal, it's an easy answer.

"My mom's lasagna," he said. "I've eaten a million lasagnas from a million chefs at a million restaurants and none are better than my mother's."



## On The Island

Chef Michael Symon's favorite Long Island eateries:

- The Meeting House, Amagansett • Dopo La Spiaggia, Sag Harbor
- Grindstone Coffee & Donuts, Sag Harbor

## Celebrity Autobiography

3/4/17

Broadway on Main 3/10/17

Sarah Jarosz 3/17/17

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