

'Iron Chef America' chef and 'Bon Appetit' executive chef Cat Cora wants to branch out with own show



Not just any show and definitely not a simple how-to series, either. "I would like a food/lifestyle show," Cora said. "We're not sure what that is yet. I want to be able to share what I do, and how I raise my family. I feel like I have a story to tell. I enjoy talking and listening, sharing ideas, and sharing advice."

She is no stranger to TV, of course. She's co-hosted 's "Kitchen Accomplished" and battled on ".

Cora, who is also executive chef for , said her team is fielding TV opportunities now, and not just with the Food Network.

"It may be anywhere," she said. "The great thing that has happened with food is it's pretty much everywhere. A lot of networks are wanting to get into food and lifestyle: Bravo, Lifetime, Food."

Outside of TV, Cora is married to , and lives in with their four sons. She's written cookbooks, has a restaurant at the resort in , a magazine job, and a desire to do more on TV.

"I feel like I want to do something bigger," she said. "People learn so much from those shows. I think you really got to find a niche that's a little broader on a pulse of right now."

For now, Cora is focusing on a appearance this morning and tomorrow she'll be at the Bon Appetit Supper Club, where she'll be one of the judges for "Taste of Something" cooking competition for amateur chefs. Three chefs will cook for her and three other judges, and the winner gets a shot at an international competition sponsored by LG. Before TV came along, Cora thought just getting to and going to the was as big as life would get. Maybe, she thought, she might get a cookbook deal.

She's far surpassed those dreams, and is looking for more.

"We're going into the ninth season of 'Iron Chef,' and it's as big as ever," Cora said. "And we're working on a couple of other pilots and looking at other shows. I will have my own show one day."

Interview:

When I first heard the name Cat Cora I thought that the girl on the "Iron Chef" was of Italian origin. However

seeing the name Karagiozos in parenthesis next to her name left me with no doubt that what we have here is an extraordinary Greek girl that makes Greeks proud. She was born in Jackson, Mississippi where her grandfather and father owned Greek restaurants. Although she could have easily jumped into the restaurant business, she chose a different route. Cat is not your average person, or your average



celebrity chef. She has a degree in B.A in Exercise Physiology and Biology from the University of Southern Mississippi. She in a same sex marriage with Jennifer Cora, and when it came to having a family, she and her partner decided to carry each others' eggs at the same time, something that she described to Greek Reporter as a wonderful bonding experience. They already have two children and Jennifer gave birth to their third on April 5th. Greeks sometimes are conservative, and may disapprove of openly gay children, but Cora described her parents as "open-minded and free spirited". Recently she partnered with Disney to create the first Mediterranean restaurant in Disneyworld named "Kouzina" (the Greek word for kitchen). Her future plans include a book due out in

2010, more episodes of the Iron Chef and a new line of merchandise. She is a person that younger generations can



look to for inspiration.

What parts of Greece is your family from?

Skopelos, Greece in the Northern Aegean.

Do you visit Greece often? Speak Greek?

I do not speak fluently but can hold my own with understanding the language. It is an ongoing goal of mine to become fluent. We try to visit once a year.

Is it true that your grandmother inspire you to become a chef?

I did not know my Greek grandmother or Yia Yia Nina, but my other grandmother Alma was a great cook. So was my mom, dad and just about everyone in the family.

Do you think that we, Greeks, are sometimes obsessed with food? Is this bad?

It is never bad to be obsessed unless it affects your health. But to be very passionate about food is a great thing.

Did you change your last name?

I didnt change it, but it was changed when my grandfather came through Ellis Island. It went from Karagiozos to Cora.

Why did you get a B.A in Exercise

Physiology and Biology if you already knew you wanted to become a chef?

Well, in the South back in the early 90's there was not a whole lot of role model chefs. Back then the options were mostly in blue collar jobs. I also wanted the security of a Bachelors Degree and a college education.

Do you agree that today the younger generations do not know how to cook even simple meals, and are completely disconnected from the meal preparing process?

I think maybe a little more so than when we were growing up. But I also see a lot of young people who aspire to be in the kitchen cooking at a young age due to Iron Chef America, and so many other forums for cooking out there. I think it is becoming a lot more popular.

Do you think that the profession of a chef has a good future? What advice would you give to the younger generations that want to follow your steps?

It is a great career! My advice to young aspiring chefs would be to get lots of experience in established restaurants before jumping in with both feet. It is a tough business and you have to be sure that you absolutely love it in order to be successful.

I think Greek people are usually more conservative. Was this the case with your family?

My family is not conservative. My mom is very traditional as an Orthodox. But they are open-minded, and free spirited. Conservative is not a word that I would use to describe my family.

How is the experience to be pregnant at the same time with your partner?

It has been great. I was pleasantly surprised at how much we have been able to help each other. It has made our relationship even stronger to face these challenges together.

Are you teaching your children how to cook?

Yes, we are teaching them about ingredients as well as cooking. They love to be in the kitchen, and around cooking.

What do you enjoy most in life besides food and your family?

I love the outdoors, travel, reading, being in the water whether it is skiing or surfing. I Just enjoy nature.

Do you have any future plans that you would like to share with us?

I'm planning new restaurants, a book out in 2010, more Iron Chef and a new line of merchandise.

by Anastasios Papapostolou