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19 February 2020

MasterChef Australia Serves Up A Cast Of Favourites.

MasterChef Australia: Back To Win Contestants Announced.

MasterChef Australia, Australia's premier cooking show is returning for its 12th season with a brand new recipe.

With a bevy of familiar faces, our 24 talented and passionate former contestants are back to win, taking to the kitchen floor for the biggest opportunity of their lives – to claim the trophy which eluded them once before.

This is the who's who of **MasterChef Australia** from across all 11 previous seasons - the favourites, the beloved and the ones who set our taste buds alight. They've gone home and celebrated glowing careers, but have returned to risk it all for the elusive first place, and to hold aloft the coveted trophy.

Season One runner up, Poh Ling Yeow, said: "I've been waiting for this moment for 10 years and now I'm back. I have a little bit of unfinished business."

Season Two runner up, Callum Hann, said: "Everyone who's here is at the top of their game. This is going to be really, really tough. There's cookbook authors, TV presenters, restaurant owners and those who just missed out." Season Three contestant, Hayden Quinn, said: "MasterChef changed my life. I'm stoked to be going up against the best of the best. I've learnt a lot, my skills have improved, I'm here to take it out."

Season Seven contestant, Reynold Poernomo, said: "When I was eliminated, it was gut wrenching. Absolutely devastating. I'm sacrificing a lot to be here but it's worth it for the chance to win."

Added to the MasterChef recipe, are three new ingredients – our acclaimed judges, Jock Zonfrillo, Melissa Leong and Andy Allen who will take the helm of the show that celebrates food and the love of food.

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They may need no introduction, but we are thrilled to unveil the **MasterChef Australia** Class of 2020 as we welcome them back to the kitchen and back to win:

Amina Elshafei, NSW.

Season Four – placed 11th

After winning hearts in season four, Amina Elshafei wasted no time embracing the food world. She published her first cookbook, *Amina's Home Cooking*, travelled to different countries promoting food destinations and hosting food events, and hosted pop-ups and food demonstrations around Australia. Now back working as a paediatric nurse, Amina has jumped at the opportunity for a second chance to pursue her dream in the food industry.

Ben Milbourne, Tasmania.

Season Four – placed 5th

A Tassie boy born and bred, it was Ben's love of food and cooking which led to his first foray into **MasterChef Australia**, competing in the fourth season where he came in fifth place. Following MasterChef, he embarked on a successful media career with his TV show *Ben's Menu* which aired on Network 10 for three seasons and went on to feature in the SBS Food Network's *Andy and Ben Eat Australia* with friend and now judge, Andy Allen.

Ben also owns and operates a modern Australian restaurant in Devonport, CharlotteJack, named after his two children.

Ben Ungermann, Queensland.

Season Nine runner-up

After coming in second place in season nine of **MasterChef Australia**, father of three Ben Ungermann knew he had found his culinary passion. Dubbed the 'Ice Cream King' by fans, he soon launched Ungermann Brothers, an ice

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cream parlour alongside his brother Danny in Ipswich in 2018. The business opened a second parlour on the Gold Coast late last year.

This year Ben has expanded his ice cream empire, opening two parlours in Mumbai, and is working on new and exciting ventures in South Africa.

Brendan Pang, Western Australia.

Season 10 – placed 9th

Fan favourite Brendan Pang is back in the kitchen, and after being eliminated twice in season 10, he knows what it takes to avoid the feared black apron this time around.

Since leaving the competition Brendan hasn't taken a break, opening his own pop-up dumpling kitchen, Bumpings in Fremantle. He's run a series of pop ups with fellow MasterChef alumni, run market stalls at local festivals, and hosted cooking classes, demonstrations and regular workshops at food and wine shows across Western Australia, Malaysia and recently the United Kingdom. He's also found time to pen a highly anticipated cookbook, due for release in May.

Callum Hann, South Australia.

Season Two runner-up

Finishing just one spot shy of victory in the MasterChef kitchen in 2010 after cooking Peter Gilmore's infamous snow egg, Adelaide's Callum Hann has returned for another chance at winning the ultimate prize. It was a big decision for the chef, author and passionate cooking school owner, who late last year welcomed his first child, daughter Elle with wife Crystal.

Following his first appearance in the kitchen, Callum returned home and soon opened Sprout Cooking School. Drawing inspiration from his Barossa Valley heritage and the best produce South Australia has to offer, the interactive cooking school was followed by Sprout Health Studio in 2015, Sprout Training in 2017, and Dietary Hawk in 2018.

Chris Badenoch, Western Australia.

Season One – placed 3rd

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Give Perth powerhouse Chris Badenoch a cut of meat, and he'll plate you a meal fit for a King. The talent behind memorable season one dishes including duck neck sausage, roasted pigs head and beeramisu finished in third place, and Chris is thrilled to be returning to the MasterChef kitchen to showcase the hard-earned experience and confidence his cooking has gained.

The inaugural season of MasterChef heralded tremendous change for Chris. Not only did it ignite his passion for cooking, but it introduced him to fellow contestant Julia Jenkins, who's now his wife. Following the show, Chris and Julia opened their own Melbourne restaurant, Josie Bones in November 2010. He also launched his own beer brand, Boneyard Brewing.

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Courtney Roulston, NSW.

Season Two – placed 5th

Courtney Roulston admits her first turn in the MasterChef kitchen overhauled her life. Previously reserved and shy, she has come a long way since her 2010 appearance, now travelling Australia hosting cooking demonstrations while presenting her own TV show, **Farm to Fork** on Network 10.

Since leaving the competition Courtney has become ensconced in the food industry, and for 10 years has worked as caterer for the AFL's Sydney Swans and has written two books, *The Salad Kitchen* and *Salads In A Jar*.

Dani Venn, Victoria.

Season Three – placed 4th

Following her season three appearance, Dani went on to host her own television show *Weekend Feast* and co-hosted a summer of breakfast radio on Nova FM in Melbourne. She is the director of Eat it Up Creative and the founder of The Wholehearted Cook. Her new venture sees her determined to change the world one bowl at a time with plans for her first bricks and mortar food business, Go Go Bowl, currently in the works. Designed to transform the takeaway industry, she's excited by the introduction of her healthy fast food company to the market.

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Emelia Jackson, Victoria.

Season Six – placed 3rd

Sweet Queen Emelia Jackson is back to take glory in the MasterChef kitchen, six years after falling just shy of the ultimate prize. Eliminated on a whipped chocolate ganache, the former marketing co-ordinator from Melbourne's east left the show with a newfound booming confidence, going on to open her own cake business. She now spends her days preparing decadent bespoke wedding, engagement, birthday, and event cakes.

Harry Foster, Queensland.

Season Eight – placed 3rd

While stumbling just shy of the season eight grand finale, third place getter and fan favourite Harry Foster has plenty more to prove.

Following his last appearance in the competition, Harry moved to Tasmania where, alongside other adventures, he worked in luxury accommodation, studied plant science, and co-opened a gin distillery. His time in Tasmania strengthened his food focus, which is centered around sustainable fishing practices. Before relocating back to Queensland to pursue his passion for film making and seafood, his weekends were spent free diving off the remote Tasmanian coast, catching abalone and crayfish to incorporate into fresh ocean focused feasts with friends.

Hayden Quinn, NSW.

Season Three – placed 6th

One of our most prolific past contestants, Hayden threw himself into the world of food following his first appearance on screens back in 2012. A Bachelor of Science in marine biology graduate, Hayden entered the kitchen as a surfer and professional lifeguard and left with a burgeoning culinary career on the horizon.

He has hosted *Hayden Quinn South Africa* and *Surfing the Menu Next Generation* on the ABC, but his self-described baby is **Taste Of Australia** which first aired on Network 10 in February.

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The author of cookbooks *Dish it Up* and *Surfing the Menu*, Hayden credits his mum Jo-Anne, a home economist, with teaching him the early basics, together enjoying home style cooking competitions against each other in their Northern Beaches home.

Jess Liemantara, Victoria.

Season 10 – placed 4th

Just 19 years old when she entered the MasterChef kitchen in season 10, dessert powerhouse Jess Liemantara is once again the youngest recruit this season. Happy to have her ability defy her age, Jess has proven she's the reigning Sweet Queen, recently self-publishing her first cookbook, *A Zest of Jess*.

After leaving the competition in fourth place, Jess knows the skills she's developed in the time since leaves her in the best position to hone her sights on the MasterChef trophy. She's worked as a pastry chef at Om Nom Dessert Bar, The Press Club, Nobu Melbourne, and catered several events during a stint at Raffles Hotel, Jakarta.

Khanh Ong, Victoria.

Season 10 – placed 3rd

Two years on after falling just short of the grand finale in season 10, Khanh Ong has wasted no time leaving his mark on Melbourne's culinary landscape, joining The George on Collins. He also co-hosted episodes of *My Market Kitchen* and has written a cookbook due for release this July.

Crediting his first round in the MasterChef kitchen with teaching him new skills, techniques and how to deal with pressure, he says the show also taught him to trust his instincts and think on his feet.

Laura Sharrad, South Australia.

Season Six runner-up

After coming in runner-up in season six, Adelaide chef Laura Sharrad knows she only needs to break down one more wall to claim the coveted trophy which eluded her so many years ago.

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Far from the fresh-faced teenager who battled it out against eventual winner Brent Owens, Laura (known then as Laura Cassai) took the skills and opportunity from the MasterChef kitchen and parlayed them into an enviable food career. After the show she worked as the pastry chef alongside new judge Jock Zonfrillo at his acclaimed hatted restaurant Orana, before moving onto Andres Cucina for three years. She spent time at the award-winning Hently Farm in the Barossa Valley in 2018, before embarking on her own restaurant, Nido Bar and Pasta which she opened last year. The venture was a special one for the now 24-year-old, opening the space alongside her new husband and fellow chef Max Sharrad.

Lynton Tapp, Victoria.

Season Five runner-up

It was no mean feat which saw Lynton Tapp fall just short in the season five grand finale. Battling to recreate Ben Shewry's *Plight of the Bees*, the 700 layered honeycomb dessert just toppled the then Northern Territory native, but he's back to reclaim victory and take home the coveted MasterChef trophy.

Following the competition and determined to improve on his newfound skills, Lynton trained under chef Matt Germanchis, and in 2016 released his debut cookbook, *Outback Pantry*. He went on to host two television shows – *A Taste of Travel* and *My Market Kitchen* on Network 10, and opened a restaurant with his brother-in-law, Westwood in West Melbourne.

Poh Ling Yeow, South Australia.

Season One runner-up

Poh was catapulted into the centre of the Australian food scene in the first season of **MasterChef Australia**, when the popular South Australian narrowly missed out on taking home the top prize. Weeks after the finale, she was offered her own cooking show, *Poh's Kitchen*, which ran for three seasons.

In 2015 Poh continued her television career with her series *Poh & Co*, which ran for two seasons, a fly-on-the-wall look into her chaotic life as a cook, artist and small business owner.

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In 2010 she fulfilled a lifelong dream of publishing her first cookbook, *Poh's Kitchen - My Cooking Adventures*. Four years on Poh's second cookbook, *Same Same But Different* was released, and her third cookbook *Poh Bakes A Hundred Greats*, hit the shelves in 2017.

Poh has also run Jamface at the Adelaide Showgrounds Farmers Market for five years and is about to open a flagship store at the Adelaide Airport.

Reece Hignell, NSW.

Season 10 – placed 6th

Leaving the competition in sixth place, Reece knew he'd achieved something significant, and was buoyed by his newfound confidence. Guilty of often self-doubting his cooking abilities, he realised he was capable of taking risks, and now looks forward to taking out top honours.

Now a confident cake baker, this Newcastle native loves making anything sweet, and is back to try his luck again in the MasterChef kitchen following his appearance in 2018 in the show's 10th season.

Reynold Poernomo, NSW.

Season Seven – placed 4th

Since bowing out of the seventh season of **MasterChef Australia** in fourth place, Sydney's Reynold Poernomo has gone onto become one of the most successful alumni of the highly competitive show.

Shortly after he finished, he joined forces with his brothers to launch KOI Dessert Bar in 2016. The successful venture featured innovative and creative desserts, and the family has now expanded with KOI Dessert Kitchen, Monkey's Corner and TiNi Artisan Bakehouse.

Alongside his burgeoning businesses, Reynold was also named a finalist in the *Gault & Millau* Pastry Chef of the Year awards in 2017, was listed in *Forbes Asia's* 30 under 30 the same year, appeared on the fifth season of *MasterChef Indonesia* as a guest judge, and hosted a TEDx talk.

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Rose Adam, South Australia.

Season Seven – placed 10th

For season seven fan favourite, Rose Adam returning to the **MasterChef Australia** kitchen where she bowed out in 10th place is all about challenging herself and her skills. Just six weeks following her elimination she achieved her food dream, opening her café, The Middle Store, alongside her siblings in Adelaide. Now she's back with a clear identity in her food and a goal to take home the top prize.

The third of four children born and raised in Adelaide, Rose's close-knit Lebanese family bought and ran a deli for many years as a child, and she admits her heritage and family continue to inspire her cooking. Her new goal following this season is to set up a wholesale falafel business with a range of wet and dry spices and rubs.

Sarah Clare, Tasmania.

Season 10 – placed 10th

After competing in season 10 of MasterChef Sarah returned to her Tasmanian roots and is now firmly ensconced back home with her young son Elvis.

After working in the kitchen at Fat Pig Farm alongside Mathew Evans, Sarah launched a series of pop ups called Wild, featuring beautifully sourced, local ingredients. She now runs her own restaurant, ILHA in Cygnet, which features a modern Australian menu with South American influences.

Sarah Tiong, NSW.

Season Nine – placed 6th

Lawyer Sarah Tiong became a fan favourite in season nine, applauded for her vivacious personality and various uses of pork in challenges. After being eliminated in sixth place, it was little surprise she started work as a private chef with her pop-up street food stall, Pork Party.

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Still working part-time as a lawyer, Sarah now also develops recipes and runs MasterClasses and events for big name local brands. Sarah is currently working on a cookbook to be published this year.

Simon Toohey, Victoria.

Season 11 – 3rd

After coming in third place in last year's season, Victorian vegie King Simon Toohey has just a few hurdles to jump to claim the elusive title this season.

After showcasing his love of seasonal vegetables throughout his time on **MasterChef Australia**, Simon showed where there's smoke there's seriously fire, opening a pop-up vegan smokehouse after the grand finale last year.

His restaurant opened in Melbourne's Williamstown to rave reviews, featuring familiar ingredients cooked in creative ways. He's now launched the Sustainable Earth Network, focussing on driving the idea of utilising whole ingredients and fighting food waste.

Tessa Boersma, Queensland.

Season 11 runner-up

Fresh from the season 11 MasterChef kitchen, runner-up Tessa Boersma knows she only has one rung left to climb in the elusive ladder to culinary victory.

Committed to the ultimate prize since finishing last year's season she's been busy writing recipes and worked alongside former guest chef Alanna Sapwell at Brisbane's acclaimed ARC Dining.

Tracy Collins, South Australia.

Season Six – placed 5th

After finishing fifth in season six when she was bundled out on a lobster with citrus beurre blanc, Tracy returned home and started the highly successful Harvest Kitchen restaurant, which in 2016 was awarded best regional restaurant in South Australia.

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In the busy years which followed, Tracy released Wermut, an organic botanicals vermouth alongside her winemaker husband Jaysen, hosted pop-ups, spoke at charity events and worked alongside Maggie Beer. However, opting to change direction on the eve of opening a second restaurant, Tracy decided to take a step back to focus on her family, with her children Finella, Harper and Charlie quickly growing up.

Want to know more, and we know you do! Get in touch with:

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