

## AFTERS

## Small screen cuisine

Cooking shows have come a long way since Julia Child started stuffing chicken on air back in 1963. With so much on the menu lately it's hard to choose which programs serve up the best TV and the best recipes. Here's a sample of a few we think are worth RSVPing (or PVRing) for. **By Elio Iannacci**

HOST AND STYLE	SYNOPSIS	HAUTE OR HOME?	AFTERTASTE	DISH BEHIND THE DISHES	OUR DREAM EPISODE	RATING (out of 5)
 <p><b>NIGELLA FEASTS</b> Nigella "food is never just fuel" Lawson. <b>FOOD STYLE</b> Chic, European, Continental cuisine. Anything under the Tuscan Sun.</p>	Beautifully lit in a white-walled, stainless steel kitchen, the 47-year-old U.K. cooking sensation pontificates on the virtues of fennel, grade A truffles and some severely snooty teatime snacks.	Haute. She doesn't have recipe cards... she has "cookery notebooks." Everything about this program is demure and hoity-toity and it's lit like a Gap store. White, bright, clean tabletops make rustic foods — such as Lawson's famous sausage and lentils dish — look like a royal family feast.	Lady MacBread knows her stuff (and stuffing she loves turkey). She is obviously pleasing to the eye and ear, but the mouth doesn't really buy into all that faux provincial cooking experience. Even Martha has a more accessible flavour to her show.	A former restaurant critic, Lawson never tires of people calling her sexy (which is often). In a recent interview with the Food Network, when asked about how she feels about constantly being called voluptuous, she is quoted as saying "at my age you're grateful for every compliment, however it's delivered."	Prince William and Prince Harry make bangers and mash with Nigella. The Queen (or Helen Mirren) supervises.	★★★
 <p><b>DAVID ROCCO'S DOLCE VITA</b> The über-slick David Rocco who flirts his way through Italy in a flawless wardrobe. <b>FOOD STYLE</b> Italian</p>	Rocco, a former Armani model, tours Florence, Sicily and the Amalfi Coast of Italy in search of the perfect cannoli, pasta dishes and kitchen conversation in homes, trattorias and ristoranti, north and south of the boot.	Home. Most of the dishes are fairly simple to make and most ingredients can be found in Canadian markets, with the exception of a Sicilian lemon here or a Florentine fig there. The stories behind each dish are an education, too. For example, when he has a night out with "da guys," he cooks drunken spaghetti — a recipe that requires adding wine and anchovies to the sauce.	Sure Rocco's manicured hands can peel a mean potato, but he's no chef and that's what makes this show brilliant. He also looks great in skinny jeans and Lacoste polos, but the show offers more than just his pretty face and witty banter. He gives the real stars the limelight — Italy's gorgeous landscape and its food-savvy inhabitants.	Rocco has graced the covers of many Harlequin romance books and was named one of Canada's top cultural innovators by <i>Flare</i> magazine last year for bringing the richness of Sicily into Saskatoon and beyond.	Rocco does a segment on Italy's top designer outlets. You just know he knows them all.	★★★★
 <p><b>THE MARTHA STEWART SHOW</b> V.I.P. person Martha Stewart <b>FOOD STYLE</b> American and world</p>	The domestic deity bosses a celebrity of choice (look out for the re-runs of Isabella Rossellini or Christy Turlington — hilarious), into cooking up deceptively simple entrées, desserts or appetizers. In between the celeb factor, Stewart shares baking secrets and invites an array of craft masters, such as Betz White, to show you how to make — we're not kidding — things like felted wool teacup pincushions.	Majorly haute. This woman has out-talked Sarah Brightman on the complexities of including "finely grated lime zest" to make the "perfect" Sweet Apricot Pudding. It gets home once in a while when someone down-to-earth like Aretha Franklin comes by and horrifies Martha by making a ham covered in cherries, pineapple and coconut... with four sticks of butter.	Martha Co (or as they called her in jail, MC Slammer) is an institution. Can't touch this. She is supremely passionate about her job and it shows. After all, she single-handedly started the Domestic Revolution in the '90s and her influence continues to change the way dinner parties function everywhere.	We'll need another chart...	Martha gets Rosie O'Donnell to co-host and invites The Donald to cook up some baby back ribs with her.	★★★★★
 <p><b>RACHAEL RAY SHOW</b> The "everywoman" Rachael Ray <b>FOOD STYLE</b> 30-minute-or-less recipes</p>	Ray is a woman on-the-go, go, go. She's not afraid to use Cheese Whiz and loves making meatball hero sandwiches with guests. In between all the sizzling and microwaving (!), she tackles hard-to-take Oprah-esque topics, such as "kids who want plastic surgery." Think of it as a Cirque du Soleil type of food/lifestyle show — you never know what you're going to get.	Any more down home and she would be doing the show at McDonald's. She acts like a complete sweetheart but the sophistication level is a cotton-poly blend at best.	The recipes don't look that appetizing and the yammering about constantly being strapped for time seems to waste everyone's time. There is just too much going on at once to really focus on food or any topic tackled.	<i>The National Enquirer</i> unfortunately ran a highly unflattering cover story on how Ray's husband, John Cusimano, had an affair with another woman. Whether this is true remains to be seen.	Rachael stops rushing through the recipes and chills with a double martini and a musical guest like Enya or Norah Jones. Just watching her stresses us out.	★★
 <p><b>RICARDO AND FRIENDS</b> Quebec's Ricardo Larrivée <b>FOOD STYLE</b> French Canadian local delicacies mixed with some international favourites.</p>	Garishly-dressed Ricardo (his shirts look like hideous Cavalli knock-offs from 1997) presents a series of delicious dishes with French-Canadian flair. The pieces of Québécois heritage infused in Ricardo's shows are commendable and quite engaging. Some have called Larrivée "Quebec's Naked Chef" but we'd argue he's much more articulate and less sexy than Jamie Oliver.	Ricardo's dishes look like easy-to-make and tasty-to-eat affairs. They don't lack the sophistication of a chef's hand but they also don't seem too over-the-top for everyday Joes and Janes to take on.	Although we want to love this show because it does have such rich Québécois history (which is sadly lacking on Canuck TV), it comes across as a little too precious. The scripts need refining and the delivery doesn't seem as "real" (he films the show in his home) as Ricardo claims he is. The food, however, looks absolutely to-die-for.	A famous Montreal nun named Soeur Angéle, set Ricardo up on a blind date with his now-wife, a nutritionist and food journalist.	Ricardo gets a stylist and is outfitted in pieces by Burberry or at least something by Montreal designer Philippe Dubuc. Not completely though — his shabby chic hair can stay but the stone wash jeans and crazy shirts are hard on the eyes.	★★★
 <p><b>ROAD TASTED</b> Dish jocks Bobbie and Jamie Dean <b>FOOD STYLE</b> American mom and pop.</p>	Two loud-mouthed brothers embark on an endless road trip to find — and later, make — America's best local yokel take-out specialties. Think of it as a culinary <i>Dukes of Hazzard</i> .	Home. Recipes range from cardiac-alert BBQ sauces picked up in the Dirty South to richer-than-Trump marshmallow and peanut butter gelatos in the lower east side of Manhattan. Everything is explained step-by-step and it's a fun watch.	There is something alarmingly charming about these brothers from Savannah, Ga. They tell it like it is and offer up fresh (and often hilarious) observations for both upscale dishes and humble, home-made treats. Plus, the concept is fun. Who doesn't love a road trip?	These good ol' boys and their mom, Paula Deen, still run a famous Savannah-based restaurant called The Lady & Her Sons. Due to the family's popularity, their mom was also cast in the film <i>Elizabethtown</i> , alongside Orlando Bloom and Kirsten Dunst.	Bobbie, Jamie and Kevin Federline all drive up to Montreal and learn how to make poutine at a downtown St. Hubert. Roch Voisine shows up for support.	★★★★