

TV dinners

COOKING SHOWS HAVE BECOME POPULAR EVER SINCE

JULIA CHILD STARTED STUFFING CHICKEN ON AIR BACK IN 1963. WITH SO MANY NEW ONES TO CHOOSE FROM, UNWIND SERVES UP A SAMPLE PLATTER OF WHAT'S WORTH WATCHING NOW. BY ELIO IANNACCI

	HOST(S)	SYNOPSIS	HAUTE OR HOME?	AFTERTASTE	DISH BEHIND THE DISHES	RATING (OUT OF 5)	
Avventura TVO FOOD STYLE Italian		The stunning-to-watch David Rocco. His knowledge of Italian cuisine may be questionable, but his wardrobe is flawless.	Rocco, a former Armani model, travels around Italy and snoops into the best kitchens in homes and restaurants, north and south of the boot.	Home. The pastas are quite easy to make, but entrée recipes are semi-challenging, depending on the availability of certain ingredients in Canada.	Rocco doesn't really cook anything but has a lot of wardrobe changes. The show's real star is the Italian countryside. Chef Pasquale has nothing to worry about.	Rocco's image has graced the covers of many Harlequin romance books. His wife, Nina Rocco, coproduces the show.	★ ★ ★ ½
Bonnie Stern Entertains WTN FOOD STYLE Healthy North American		Author/chef Bonnie Stern.	Your basic camera-on-the-kitchen show. Stern is not much of a camera personality but a very well-read nutrition expert.	Home. The recipes are extremely easy to make, but they lack any sort of innovation. It takes more than nutrition to keep people from snoozing.	Nothing entertaining really happens on this show. Stern's devotion to nutrition should be applauded, but a good cohost is needed ASAP.	Stern does not use ground beef for her Italian Meatloaf in Tomato Sauce; she uses ground turkey instead.	★
Emeril Live Food Network FOOD STYLE Southern/continental/global		Food jock Emeril Lagasse is a loud-mouth cuisinier who is not afraid to use vast amounts of oil, butter or spice to please his crowd.	A standard live cooking show that follows a themed meal plan and doesn't really break any boundaries.	Home cooking presented as haute. As long as you have a great deal of hot spice in your kitchen, his recipes look like stress-free exercises.	In this case, it really is a matter of taste. If you're looking for low-cal meals, switch channels, quickly!	The show has millions of viewers despite the fact that Lagasse uses lots of butter and oil.	★ ★
From Martha's Kitchen Food Network FOOD STYLE American and world		Martha Stewart.	Martha cooks up seasonal dishes that are deceptively simple.	Who has the time? Her methods include using a propane blowtorch to unmould a jellied salad. Whatever happened to hot water?	She may be neater than a nunnery, but her ideas continue to encourage millions of dinner parties across the continent.	We'll need another chart...	★ ★ ★ ★
Inn Chef with Michael Smith Food Network FOOD STYLE Upscale Canadian		Michael Smith, a no-gimmicks chef from the East Coast.	Smith prepares in and out of the studio, and introduces A-list cheese farmers, blade-smiths and others considered the best in the food industry.	Both. Smith's challenging dishes can be cooked at home, but they require special shopping trips and previous cooking experience.	The Inn Chef is Canada's Martha Stewart (without the needlepoint tips). It serves up palatable television that will get better with age.	Try finding a table at Maple, Smith's famous restaurant in Halifax. Impossible!	★ ★ ★ ★ ½
Loving Spoonfuls WTN FOOD STYLE Home cooking from around the world		Winnipeg's David Gale, whose charm seems to bring out the best in anyone he cooks with.	A savvy documentary-style show that places Gale in the kitchens of immigrant grandmothers in Canada.	Home. All you need to cook any meal on this show is common sense: a grandmother's specialty.	Viewers have all the perfect ingredients: history, culture and pounds of personality. This clever hybrid of cooking and lifestyle has inspired others to take more risks.	As the show expands and attracts foreign broadcasters, <i>Loving Spoonfuls</i> is poised to become one of Canada's finest television exports in years.	★ ★ ★ ★ ★
The Iron Chef Food Network FOOD STYLE Fusion/faux gourmet		Ota, a hyperactive "kitchen stadium reporter." Fukui, the show's kooky announcer.	Two chefs are given a secret ingredient (anything from lobster claws to turnips) to create dishes from scratch. Three judges decide who becomes the champion of chop.	Haute. Olympic cooking that should be left for the truly skillet-skilled. Not to be attempted at home, unless you happen to have leftover squid paste in your fridge.	Even though it's the most energetic cooking show on the air, the WWF of gourmet cooking inspires more party conversations than cooking ideas.	The Iron Chef is getting so popular that people are starting their own cook-off parties. Beware: Iron Chef get-togethers may soon be all the rage.	★ ★ ★ ★
The Naked Chef Food Network FOOD STYLE Smorgasbord		The young and the very restless Jamie Oliver.	Greasy young Brit cooks greasy meals with charm.	Home cooking that requires a great deal of cleanup. By the time you finish making and cleaning up after dinner, you'd have to start on breakfast.	He's a messy boy, and so is the show. It lacks consistency and the appeal is certainly more about the host and less about the roast. (At least, he has good taste in music.)	Oliver drums for a band called the Scarlet Division. His CD, <i>Cookin': Jamie Oliver's Music to Cook By</i> , features Fatboy Slim.	★ ★
Wolfgang Puck Food Network FOOD STYLE Celebrity cuisine		Wolfgang Puck, the chef responsible for catering Hollywood's biggest events—the Emmys and the Oscars.	Chef Puck delivers high-maintenance recipes without his usual staff of 80-plus. Puck may be a great chef but he makes a lousy host.	Haute cooking sold as home. It looks like you'd have to book a week off work to make his pork chops.	The best thing about the show is the behind-the-scenes clips at Spago, his star-studded L.A. restaurant. Filming the show there would make it more appetizing.	It's no secret that Puck is known to be the Barbra Streisand of chefs—a tyrant to work with who expects perfection in every dish.	★ ★