

CLINTON TOWNSHIP

Chippewa graduate to compete on 'Hell's Kitchen'

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C AND G NEWSPAPERS

 Posted January 12, 2016



Chippewa Valley graduate Hassan Musselmani will be appearing on Fox's Hell's Kitchen starting Jan. 15. (Photo provided by FOX)



Musselmani plans to open a food truck this spring that will travel throughout metro Detroit. (Photo provided by FOX)

CLINTON TOWNSHIP— For Clinton Township native and 2008 Chippewa Valley High School graduate Hassan Musselmani, competing in “Hell” isn’t a bad thing at all.

Musselmani will be competing in this winter’s season of “Hell’s Kitchen,” which begins airing Jan. 15 on Fox.

He will bring a unique background to the show. Having roots on his father’s side in Lebanese and Arabic food, and an urban influence from his mother’s side, Musselmani has a versatile culinary background.

“It was really different for me. Not a lot of people get that experience,” Musselmani said.

He said he first discovered a love for cooking while babysitting his cousins as a teenager. After cooking for them, he moved on to work at Andary’s Grill in Clinton Township, where he would walk to a bus boy job as a 13-year old.

Musselmani would then take shuttle busses to participate in Dakota High School’s culinary arts courses in high school. In 2007, he won a gold medal and a special judge’s award at the Macomb Community Culinary Salon competition for a gingerbread creation in the dessert category.

Since then, he has worked with several different chefs and restaurants throughout the metro Detroit area, often as a consultant for new eateries or in catering for large events.

Despite working in several different places, one constant in his cooking background was the peer pressure applied by his friends and family to try out for “Hell’s Kitchen.”

“I went to it (the casting call) just to kind of shut them up,” Musselmani said with a laugh.

After standing in line for five hours for the initial call, Musselmani wound up going through a two-month interview process before being selected for the show.

“It was really surreal. You don’t really believe it until you’re there and Gordon Ramsay is in front of you,” Musselmani said. “It’s kind of unbelievable.”

The initial meeting with Ramsay includes serving the famous chef a signature dish, which for Musselmani was pan-seared diver sea scallops with roasted sweet corn coulis, poblano coulis, parmesan risotto and crispy capicola.

“I wanted to impress chef Ramsay with scallops because I think he’s always yelling at people about making scallops and risotto for him, so I figured I would kill two birds with one stone, and I would make both with some sauces that I’m really confident in. I figured this was delicious and this would describe me,” Musselmani said.

Although he is no stranger to high-pressure situations as a cook, Musselmani said the show presented pressure situations he’s never experienced before.

“It’s a totally different pressure that I never imagined. I’ve been doing freelancing for years helping different restaurants, but when you’re thrown into a different environment that you’ve never been in, you’ve got to put your best meal for one of the most important people food-wise, it’s a whole other level of stress,” Musselmani said.

“You have to be 100 percent organized in your brain before you can even get in that kitchen. You never know what curve ball is going to be there or what equipment is going to be there. You’re walking in blind but you have to produce your best dish.”

Musselmani is one of 18 contestants who will be competing for a one-year contract worth \$250,000 to be a chef at BLT Steak at Bally’s in Las Vegas.

In addition to the show, Musselmani also hopes to begin another venture this spring.

His food cart concept, the Drunken Rooster, is slated to open early this spring to offer “New American Street food” throughout metro Detroit.

Some featured items on the food cart will be a green chili and beer braised chicken sope, and a pork shawarma taco.

“I’ve been dreaming about it (the taco) for years and putting it on a menu,” Musselmani said. “It’s just kind of me. I love tacos, I love pork and I love shawarma, so why not showcase all three of them together?”

Musselmani said he has been working with local graffiti artists who will be producing the artwork for his food truck.

He expects the food truck menu to change seasonally, and it will be a melting pot of flavors.

“It will have a little bit of everything,” Musselmani said. “It’s nice to be able to go to different places and see different people. It’s a low investment risk as opposed to opening up a restaurant. I’m only 25, and I want to be on the road and moving around.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Staff Writer Thomas Franz covers Macomb Township, Chippewa Valley Schools and the Macomb County Board of Commissioners for the Macomb Township Chronicle. He also covers sports primarily for the Shelby-Utica News. He has worked for C & G Newspapers since 2013 and attended Michigan State University.

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