

## TV Review: ‘America’s Next Great Restaurant’ Tastes Pretty Bland

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 6, 2011 - 2:00pm

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CHICAGO – Part “Top Chef,” part “The Apprentice,” and even part “American Idol” and with a title borrowed from “America’s Next Top Model,” NBC’s “America’s Next Great Restaurant” is a recipe built from ingredients you’ve tasted before but that have become bland by mixing them all together with nothing new to add to the pot. Most of the elements of this reality competition are just dull as the competitors come off way more interesting than the people tasked with judging them.



TV Rating: **1.5/5.0**

Bobby Flay may be a master chef but he’s not a great reality show ringleader, as proven on “The Next Food Network Star,” another poor man’s “Top Chef.” Flay seems likable but there’s a difference between being likable and having the charisma of a Tom Colicchio, Jeff Probst, or Phil Keoghan. Flay just doesn’t have it. And he’s not helped by his co-investors in what we’re expected to believe will be the next fast-casual breakthrough a la Chipotle or Noodles & Company — Lorena Garcia, Steve Ells, and Curtis Stone.



America’s Next Great Restaurant  
Photo credit: NBC

The four judges on “America’s Next Great Restaurant” have been tasked with listening to the business dreams of 21 contestants and then whittling them down to 10 finalists who will compete every week. The winner of “America’s Next Great Restaurant” will have their idea brought to life in New York, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis. It really is an amazing prize — an instant chain with the backing of people who have made billions in the same industry.



America's Next Great Restaurant  
Photo credit: NBC

But that doesn't make it amazing TV. The first episode has a surprisingly bitter tone to it as the judges, with Stone playing the Simon Cowell "Brit Baddie" role, berate and laugh at a few of the applicants. These aren't freaks who waited in line for "American Idol." These are people who put a lot of time and effort into a shot at their dreams. Laughing at them seems kind of gross.

Even more damagingly, it's kind of boring. Most of the contestants don't have enough personality for a show like this, one that's heavily dependent on rooting for the people who might become instantly richer than you are. There are a few stand-outs including an energetic guy who wants to open a chain called "Saucy Balls," a grilled cheese specialist, and a woman with an interesting concept called "Limbo" (my early pick for a frontrunner), but it's a pretty dull clan overall and watching them for an hour cooking their concept into actuality is just dull. The producers would have been wise to just cast the 10 finalists and move on to something more interesting for the premiere.

"America's Next Great Restaurant" simply fails to find its own identity in any way. It's like reheated leftovers of shows that offered similar concepts with more entertainment value. It's possible to see the show become more interesting as the personalities of the contestants are allowed more screen time instead of just the people judging them but I doubt many who see the premiere will be around long enough for that to happen. With all the competition out there, one bad meal at a fast-casual restaurant makes it unlikely for a customer to return. This is a bad TV meal.

*"America's Next Great Restaurant" premieres on NBC on March 6th, 2011 at 7pm.*



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