

TV Review: Gordon Ramsay Returns with Nicer ‘Masterchef’ on FOX

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 22, 2013 - 9:47am

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CHICAGO – “Masterchef,” starring Gordon Ramsay, Joe Bastianich, and Graham Elliot, returns tonight, May 22, 2013 at 7pm with a two-hour premiere that hints at a kinder, gentler season, in keeping with the general trend of these shows. Recognizing that the “Hell’s Kitchen” approach isn’t going to work here, and that the generally supportive and nice judges on “The Voice” have taken over from the cynical, mocking ones on shows like “American Idol” (even Howard Stern, smart enough to know what works in the current trend, knows to play nice on “America’s Got Talent”), the producers have presented a more encouraging and interesting show, at least in the first course.



Television Rating: **3.0/5.0**

And, so, while past season auditions episodes of “Masterchef” put the spotlight on the truly awful home cooks who never should have gotten out of bed much less the kitchen, this season premiere focuses on the human stories that we’ll want to follow, cheer, and support. There are very few moments for Ramsay to become the bitter personality that we may have expected more of a few years ago. Yes, Gordon Ramsay, at least the FOX version of him, has mellowed a bit, and I’d say it’s a good thing. Joe Bastanich still over-plays the cool demeanor, never betraying his opinion of the bite he just took, but the judges overall seem more supportive and that’s a good thing.



Masterchef

Photo credit: FOX

And so instead of people who couldn’t make Kraft Mac & Cheese, we get the confident girl who delivers an interesting Prickly Pear Soup. And the producers LOVE a story. I’m sure they jumped for joy when a contestant told them that he had an engagement ring in his pocket that he was just waiting to use and his girlfriend was with him. Or when they saw the incredibly nervous kid just there to root on his mom, who may be a better cook than she even knows. These arcs feel a little forced but they’re also undeniably effective. Is it a little odd that people are going to come away from two hours thinking more about the contestants’ human interest stories than the actual food they cooked? Yes and no. This is just the audition phase and finding faces that the audience will remember is more important than illustrating their cooking ability. We can

remember the personality of the soup cook more than her actual dish.

Reviewing something like “Masterchef” is a bit odd for the reason that I don’t review season premieres of shows like “American Idol” or even “CSI” — they’re not that different from year to year. And so I’m stuck watching and trying to figure out what’s different. More often than not, there isn’t anything different. But it feels like the recipe for “Masterchef” has been tweaked this season. It’s a little sweeter. Let’s hope it doesn’t go bad before long.

“Masterchef” returns to FOX on Wednesday, May 22, 2013 at 7pm CST.



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