

## Interview: Chef Robert Irvine Wishes You a Happy Thanksgiving

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 24, 2016 - 12:13pm

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CHICAGO – What better holiday than Thanksgiving to highlight a celebrity chef? Chef Robert Irvine is familiar to fans of the Food Network, through his shows “Dinner: Impossible” and “Restaurant: Impossible.” His brand of tough love has expanded to a new self help series, appropriately titled “The Robert Irvine Show.” Irvine was recently in Chicago appearing on behalf of Comcast at the Studio Xfinity store.

Robert Irvine was born in England, and began his cooking career in the Royal Navy, which he joined at age 15. He completed his duty on Her Majesty’s Royal Yacht Britannia, and did consultant work, eventually become Executive Chef at the Taj Mahal in Las Vegas. He began his TV career in 2007 with the Food Network show “Fit for a King,” which eventually morphed into “Dinner: Impossible.”



Chef Robert Irvine at Studio Xfinity in Chicago, November 14th, 2016

Photo credit: Comcast

Chef Irvine followed that show with the even more popular “Restaurant: Impossible” in 2011, where he would rehabilitate failing eateries around the country in two days. As a veteran, he continues a commitment to military personnel and their families, donating part of his company’s proceeds to the Robert Irvine Foundation, that supports the U.S. troops, and has toured Iraq and Afghanistan. He’s authored three cookbooks, including his latest “Fit Fuel: A Chef’s Guide to Eating and Living Your Best Life.” His self help talk series, “The Robert Irvine Show,” airs daily around the country.

HollywoodChicago.com interviewed Chef Irvine at Studio Xfinity by Comcast in Chicago, as he met admirers and did a cooking demonstration.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** I wanted to start out by focusing on your new talk show. How did it develop and why is it about conflict resolution, rather than cooking or associative interviews having to do with cooking?

**Robert Irving:** It was four years in the making, and it was developed in that way because conflict is something I am good at, if you take

‘Restaurant: Impossible’ and remove the restaurant, the show is all about conflict resolution. The difference between ‘Restaurant: Impossible’ and ‘The Robert Irvine Show’ is that on latter show we deal with weigh issues, conflict with food and conflict with family, among other issues. The uniqueness of the show is that we follow up with the people we have on, to make sure they are still following through with the resolutions.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You are obviously a fitness advocate. How did your work with food, your commitment to fitness and nutrition in general lead to your book, ‘Fit Fuel’?

**Irvine:** I had written two cookbooks, and they had done well, but I wanted to move to fitness, because it’s big with me. The publisher said they didn’t want that book. So I self published it for forty thousand dollars, and sold the first 1400 copies to make my money back, and it’s in its fifth printing now. It’s a great book, it’s real, and tells you how to make changes in your life – on your time, on your terms and with me motivating you.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** ‘Restaurant: Impossible’ is a fascinating show, both in the transformations you do and the personalities we are introduced to. What did you learn about America through this project, and how people get complacent with businesses that need outside the box thinking, but never get it?

**Irvine:** What I learned about America is that anything is possible, but sometimes people get into businesses they shouldn’t be in. They go in without capital or know how, but their mothers had told them that they could cook, and they’re good with people. I found that most people who buy restaurants should never have done it, because they don’t understand money.

Also they don’t understand the harming effects that business has on relationships and on their children. The children don’t choose to be in the business, but the harming and long-term effects through arguments, divorce and conflicts over the financial issues in a business are huge. Often I had my own daughter with me, and I always think ‘what if that was my child?’

**HollywoodChicago.com:** How did doing the show affect you personally?

**Irvine:** The impression that is out there about me is that I’m really hard-nosed, but the people who really know me, know that I am a soft touch. Whenever I deal with children or the military, that becomes special to me.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** The chef culture, both in celebrity and lifestyle, has never been more on display than the present moment. With its large immigrant population, the stories of survival and the dedication, what distinguishes chefs as human beings, away from the general population?

**Irvine:** For years – especially in England where I come from – cooking was a subservient job. When I told my Dad I was going to be a cook, he wouldn’t talk to me for two years. Even though it was associated with my military service, he thought cooking was beneath me.

The culture of chefs is a melting pot, and I always say this – if we could put all the heads of state around a table, each representing their food culture, and then each take one bite of the other’s and pass it to the right, and then explain the ideals and culture around those bites, our world problems would be easier to solve. Food is culture, and we need to listen to it. America was built on immigrants, and what they bring ‘to the table.’ The sharing of food is like breaking bread, it’s very symbolic.



Robert Irvine Wields His Signature Sledge Hammer on ‘Restaurant: Impossible’

*Photo credit: Food Network*

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Before you became a celebrity chef, you were a military man and food administrator for Royal Yacht Britannia. How did those two jobs prepare you for what you are currently doing?

**Irvine:** The military taught me discipline, how to problem solve, teamwork and loyalty, a perfect parallel to the kitchen. If we could take that and bottle it, it would be a amazing thing. Every time I tour military outlets, I dedicate the food, fitness and set-ups to their service, because it all came to me through the military. Another prime example...Neil Smit, the CEO of Comcast, is a former Navy Seal, and he hires veterans.

I believe in national service, I believe that every young adult citizen should do two years of national service. Not necessarily to be deployed, but to understand teamwork, responsibility and mixing with different people.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** So much of the Food Network's zeitgeist has changed from mere cooking to competition shows. Why do you think...beyond ratings and popularity...that the competition shows strike a chord with the audience?

**Irvine:** It's a phase, and I understand it, but I've never been a competition guy. I'm appearing next month, for example, on 'Guy's Grocery Games' for charity – like 'Chopped' last year, it's all charity driven. I think people are getting tired of it, I'm tired of it, and I want to see food and chefs on the Food Network. Right now, they're are so many food shows on all networks, so the Food Network should get back to what it was always about, the food.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** You are an advocate of better use of technology to achieve efficiencies in a restaurant kitchen. Since you've become a student of how restaurant work stations are set up, from the smallest dives to the largest restaurants, what are the mistakes you saw over and over?

**Irvine:** Here's the deal, and I see this even beyond restaurants, but here are our smartphones, and we rely on them for so many functions. My point is that this technology is helping us so much – for example at 11pm every night I get information about my companies on my phone. That has changed all the ways we do business, we don't have to be at a specific place at a specific time. We can use this technology to the highest degree, for management, inventory and even recipe building and sharing.

**HollywoodChicago.com:** Since you now have such a refined palette, what is personally the best meal you ever were served?

**Irvine:** There are a couple...there was one in Walt Disney World Orlando, funny enough, by Chef Scott Hunnel at Victoria's & Alberts Restaurant there. That was one. And...this is reoccurring...any meal where I sit down with a military man or woman in uniform, anywhere at any time. The quality of the food may not be the best, but because I'm sitting with them, it makes it special.

*"The Robert Irvine Show" airs daily all around the U.S. See local listings for channel locations. For more information about Chef Robert Irvine, click [ChefIrvine.com](http://ChefIrvine.com). [14] Studio Xfinity by Comcast is located at 901 West Weed Street, Chicago. For more information, [click here](#). [15]*



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**Source URL (retrieved on Jun 18 2021 - 3:07am):**

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/27031/interview-chef-robert-irvine-wishes-you-a-happy-thanksgiving>

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