

Southern Comfort

Local Katy chef Tamie Joeckel is cooking up creative dishes on a world championship stage

Written by Wendy Teng | Photography by Amanda Walton

Tamie Joeckel competed to become America's Next Grill Star on *Live!* with Kelly and Michael

Entering a food or cooking competition requires talent, skill, passion, and drive. Tamie Joeckel, a local chef in Katy specializing in southern cooking, has entered multiple competitions such as the Smucker's Traditions Contest, the World Championships in Las Vegas, and America's Next Grill Star on *Live! with Kelly and Michael*.



World Competition

In 2011, Tamie won the \$20,000 Smucker's Family Traditions Contest. After her triumph, she was invited to compete in the World Food Championship.

The World Food Championship is a multiple-category food competition that showcases over 500 chefs and cooks with over \$300,000 in giveaways. The top 10 dishes are chosen from each category and these winners will compete against each other for the \$10,000 prize in the same category.

The winners of the top 10 dishes in each category will then compete against each other for the grand prize of \$100,000. "It's an intense competition and people come to win," Tamie says.

Tamie enters the competition in the "bacon" category. Generally, about 50 to 60 people compete in this category each year. Contestants bring their own ingredients, special cooking tools, and utensils, but Sears sponsors approximately 100 outdoor kitchens with basic cooking equipment. Every station has its own stove, microwave, food processor, blenders, grill, and shared refrigerators for contestants to use.

Tamie has placed in the Top 10 of the bacon category the two times she has competed, but she plans to go back this year to win. One of the top dishes is her bread pudding made with savory bacon, jalapeño bread, fontina and Gouda cheese, topped with a poached egg and cayenne hollandaise. The second top dish is a poblano pepper wrapped with bacon served with pepper-jack queso sauce. "I'm known for my roulades, meat dishes filled with various ingredients. If I have to prepare a piece of meat, I'll stuff it, wrap it in bacon, and grill it," says Tamie.

America's Grill Star

Tamie also participated and became a finalist on *Live! with Kelly and Michael's* America's Next Grill Star. Her recipe for chipotle fig baby back ribs was the star attraction. She describes the dish as tasting the fig-infused pork on the first bite, and tasting the chipotle pepper on the back of the tongue.

Her experience on the show was a definite bucket list item. "It was a blast! Michael Strahan and Kelly Ripa really are as nice as they seem on TV. I got the all-star treatment and it was so much fun having my makeup and hair done for the show! Every girl's dream!" Tamie only made the top four, but she met a lot of great people and became friends with other finalists.

Cooking up Traditions

Tamie isn't the only chef in the family. Together with her sister

Trena, they formed the blog *Two Southern Sisters* and post their unique recipes and creations. "My sister Trena and I always joke - my tools are knives and spatulas and her tools are power saws and drills. That's why we're the perfect two southern sisters," says Tamie. The sisters' family has developed cooking skills over years of tradition. Trena explains, "Our truly southern roots go back five generations in Texas. Our ancestors grew their own crops and livestock, so farm to table is the way we grew up! Meals were an important part of family traditions and family time."

The whole family has an affinity with food and cooking. Tamie loves spicy food and calls herself the casserole queen. She remarks, "Give me bacon, butter, and cheese and I'll whip up something glorious." While Trena specializes in decorations and building,

she also has a passion for cooking and baking. Trena's husband, Danny, is also a wonderful cook, and Tamie usually shares the kitchen with her brother-in-law to cook meals together for the family or create new, inspired recipes.

Appreciating Simple Things

Tamie is currently working on a cookbook that will focus on southern comfort foods and family traditions. She advises, "I think we all need to get back to appreciating the simple things in life. We have an obligation to create a love of family, values, and traditions for our kids. Food can be the glue that helps us create lifelong memories." **KM**

WENDY TENG enjoys reading, writing, volunteering, trying new restaurants in her spare time.



Tamie and her sister Trena Anderson post their original recipes on a blog called, *Two Southern Sisters*