

# Iron Chef Cat Cora



It's no surprise **Cat Cora** became a world renowned chef. Her culinary aspirations began at an early age, and by 15, she had developed a business plan for her own restaurant. In 2005, she made television history on Food Network's *Iron Chef America* as the first and only female Iron Chef.

There is no doubt Cat's upbringing had an influence on her career. She was raised in a small Greek community in Jackson, Mississippi, by a family for whom cooking and eating were the center of life. Her first cookbook, *Cat Cora's Kitchen*, was inspired by her Greek and Southern heritage and contains many of her family's favorite recipes. With advice from her famous mentor, Julia Child, Cat left Mississippi for New York, where she received the education of her dreams at The Culinary Institute of America. While in New York, she apprenticed with and worked for chef Anne Rozenweig at Arcadia and worked at the Beekman Tavern under chef Larry Forgione of An American Place. Cat's culinary education continued in Europe with apprenticeships with two of France's three-star Michelin chefs. After returning to New York, Cat honed her skills as a sous chef at The Old Chatham Shepherding Company under chef Melissa Kelly. She soon headed west to plant her roots in Northern California, where she served as chef de cuisine at Napa Valley's Bistro Don Giovanni.

Cat made her TV debut in 1999, as co-host of Food Network's *Melting Pot* with Rocco Di Spirito. She went on to host *My Country My Kitchen: Greece*, *Date Plate* and Fine Living's *Simplify Your Life*. A documentary, *Cat's In The Kitchen*, was also made about her first James Beard dinner in April, 2002. Prior to *Iron Chef America*, Cat was co-host of Food Network show, *Kitchen Accomplished* where she worked with a design expert and contractor to surprise a homeowner with a 3-day kitchen makeover. In 2006, Cat appeared alongside Wolfgang Puck in NBC's primetime miniseries, *Celebrity Cooking Showdown*, where celebrities were paired with famous chefs and competed in a timed cook-off à la *Iron Chef*.

Outside of the kitchen, Cat is known for her philanthropy. She is president and founder of *Chefs for Humanity*, an organization which was founded in response to the 2004 tsunami disaster. Modeled after Doctors Without Borders, the non-profit organization gathers the culinary community together to raise funds and provide resources for important emergency, educational and hunger-related causes. In addition to this, she recently became the nutritional spokesperson for UNICEF.