

Name: _____ Class: _____

Two Finalists Vie To Be 'Master Chef Junior'

By David Greene (Host)
From Npr.Org • 2013

'Master Chef Junior' is a reality show in which 8 to 13-year-old chefs compete for the title of 'Master Chef Junior.' In this episode of NPR's Morning Edition, host David Greene interviews the finalists in the 2013 season and the celebrity chef Joe Bastianich. As you read, think about what factors set these junior chefs apart from their adult chef counterparts.

- [1] **DAVID GREENE, HOST:** Tonight, a big moment for a couple of extraordinary chefs. There were originally 24 but after unimaginable cooking challenges, devastating eliminations and, yes, some tears, the field is down to two. We're talking about the reality cooking show "Master Chef Junior." These contestants were ages 8 to 13. Some stood on crates to reach their cooking stations.



"pro chef" is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

The two finalists: 12-year-old Dara Yu and 13-year-old Alexander Weiss. We spoke to them along with one of the celebrity judges, chef Joe Bastianich. Dara Yu says when she's not on TV, it's her friends who are doing the tasting.

DARA YU: I bake a lot for my friends, and I'm actually in a class at my school. So every week, we get a theme. And then we have to make a dish around that theme. And then if I have extra, I'll give them out to all my friends.

GREENE: How do your friends and fellow students deal with being in a cooking class with you? What is that dynamic like?

- [5] **DARA:** Well, it's kind of funny. I was actually just on a camping trip and everyone, every meal, would be like, is this good enough for you? Is...

GREENE: Does this measure up to what you do, Dara?

DARA: Yeah. Is this like, Dara-worthy?

(LAUGHTER)

DARA: I was just like um, I can't really answer that because the chefs are standing right there.

[10] **GREENE:** Alexander, let me ask you about the types of pressure on this show. I mean, you're 13. You're in eighth grade. A lot of people criticize parents, saying they put way too much pressure on kids in middle school and high school. Tell me if you think this kind of competitive spirit is a good thing for someone your age.

ALEXANDER WEISS: You know, it's important to have some competitive spirit in your life because that's what it's going to be like in the real world. And the restaurant service, that was a really different experience and...

GREENE: We should say, all of you got in a kitchen, and you actually served a meal at a restaurant.

DARA: Yeah.

ALEXANDER: Yeah. I mean, it was really scary.

[15] **DARA:** Yeah, it was.

ALEXANDER: It's not an easy thing to do. There's something that I kind of liked through the restaurant service. When we went out there and saw the diners' reactions and, you know, their comments on our food, something's really special about that, that you don't get from every other career in life.

JOE BASTIANICH: That's amazing, Alexander. You have the two fundamental factors in being a professional chef. You are a masochist¹ who needs approval.

(LAUGHTER)

GREENE: Well, let me ask all of you. I read one piece describing the show, and it talked about the grace and the composure the kids showed when they did lose. And it was almost, in a way, more graceful and handled better than adults would show, when we had lost something. I mean, did you feel that way - that you were setting an example maybe not just for other youngsters like yourselves, but also for us, adults?

[20] **DARA:** I definitely think that it's, like, we're setting an example to adults, showing them that like, one door closes and another one will open. And that's kind of how it is in the "Master Chef" kitchen. But all the kids who have gone home, they've already shown what they have. And that's going to get them ahead in life.

ALEXANDER: Yeah. And to add on to Dara, we're always with each other, throughout this whole process. I mean, yes, of course - you know, people go home every other day; and it's really disappointing to see our friends go home. But you know, in LA, we really bonded together because we were kind of trapped in a hotel room for our lives.

GREENE: It's kind of an odd kind of summer camp, but it sounds like these are going to be lasting friendships.

ALEXANDER: Yeah.

1. A person who likes pain

DARA: Yes. Definitely. I've made family from this. And it was a summer camp because the food wasn't that good.

[25] (LAUGHTER)

GREENE: The food wasn't that good?

DARA: Our caterers at the hotel.

GREENE: I think you guys just have high standards.

BASTIANICH: Yeah. We've got to keep them hungry. We don't feed them that well.

[30] (LAUGHTER)

GREENE: Well, I want to hear about the food challenge that got you two into the final round. Each of you were given a different part of a chicken to make a restaurant-quality meal. And Alexander, you were given the chicken liver.

ALEXANDER: I hadn't eaten chicken livers before that; and from watching cooking shows, I kind of got an idea of what I was going to do. And as I was cooking it and everything was starting to come together, I tasted it. And after being so scared for so long of chicken livers, I realized that, you know, it tastes really good.

GREENE: Tell me about the dish that you made.

ALEXANDER: It was a chicken liver pate. It's like an Italian Tuscan-style dish. And I made a homemade cherry kind of marmalade to go with it, for some sweetness, on a garlic crostini with a reduced balsamic glaze.

[35] **BASTIANICH:** It was great. I can still taste it now.

(LAUGHTER)

GREENE: In comparison, Dara, I guess you got chicken wings to cook.

DARA: Yep.

GREENE: Tell me about the dish you ended up making.

[40] **DARA:** Well, I made a soy ginger glazed wing with pickled cucumbers, carrots and radishes. For my dish, I wanted to kind of go in a different direction and the pickled vegetables, actually, that's a family recipe.

GREENE: Mm-hmm.

DARA: And I thought that would just go really well with like, an Asian-style wing.

GREENE: It worked.

DARA: Yeah. It worked.

[45] **GREENE:** Where's the family recipe come from?

DARA: My grandma, actually. She has all these like, old cookbooks from her mom and her sisters, of like, handwritten recipes.

GREENE: Wow.

DARA: Like, just binders of them. I see where I get my love of cooking.

GREENE: She is just 12 years old. That's Dara Yu and also, 13-year-old Alexander Weiss. They're the two finalists remaining on "Master Chef Junior." The winner will be revealed tonight.

"Two Finalists Vie To Be 'Master Chef Junior'" from NPR.org, © 2013, National Public Radio. Reprinted with permission, all rights reserved.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Which of the following best describes the effect of including the sentence, “Some stood on crates to reach their cooking stations”? (Paragraph 1) [RI.3]
 - A. To emphasize how young, but capable the contestants are
 - B. To show how difficult it is for junior chefs to be taken seriously
 - C. To demonstrate the willingness of the junior chefs to do whatever it takes to become great master chefs
 - D. To help the reader differentiate between young chefs and adult chefs

2. PART A: Which of the following best describes the attitude of the contestants? [RI.6]
 - A. The contestants don’t really care about the outcome of Master Chef Junior.
 - B. The contestants have a lot of anxiety about who will ultimately win Master Chef Junior.
 - C. The contestants are working hard but believe that, regardless of the outcome of the show, it will have been a worthwhile experience.
 - D. The contestants are competing head-to-head against one another, and are trying constantly to prove why they should win.

3. PART B: Which of the following quotation best supports your answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. “DARA: But all the kids who have gone home, they've already shown what they have. And that's going to get them ahead in life.”
 - B. “GREEN: It’s kind of like an odd summer camp, but it sounds like these are going to be lasting friendships.”
 - C. “BASTIANICH: Yeah. We’ve got to keep them hungry. We don't feed them that well.”
 - D. “DARA: I see where I get my love of cooking.”

4. According to the contestants, what makes this show different from typical chef reality shows? Cite evidence in your answer. [RI.2]

5. Which of the following best describes the primary effect of the celebrity chef's comments in the article? [RI.3]
- A. His comments help the reader understand the difficulty of becoming a master chef.
 - B. His comments add some humor to the article.
 - C. His comments are meant to emphasize how difficult it is to win the contest.
 - D. His comments give the reader insight into what it's like on the show behind the scenes.

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Do you agree with Dara Yu's comment that these junior chefs are setting an example for adults? What kind of an example have they set for adults? For other young people?
2. What sorts of character traits are necessary to be successful on this show? Explain your answer.
3. What does it mean to be 'grown up'? Cite evidence from this article, your own experience, and other literature or art in your example.
4. According to the text, what are some characteristics we normally associate with "adult" behaviors? What about "childish" behaviors?