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2025 SPECIAL HOLIDAY ISSUE

GORDON RAMSAY

SHOOTING FOR THE STARS

by Margie Goldsmith



Multi-Michelin Star chef, restaurateur, author, and entrepreneur Gordon Ramsay has starred in TV shows such as *Kitchen Nightmares*, *Hell's Kitchen*, *Hotel Hell*, *MasterChef USA*, *Next Level Chef*, *Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted*, and *Gordon's Great Escape*. Now, Chef Ramsay has created and co-produced (along with executive producers Lisa Edwards and Morgan Roberts) an eight-episode docuseries, *Knife Edge: Chasing Michelin Stars*. The series premiered globally October 10th on Apple TV by Studio Ramsay Global, a Fox Entertainment Company. However, the eponymous global celebrity will not appear in the series; it will be hosted by food expert Jesse Burgess, co-founder and presenter of *TOPJAW*.

Says Chef Ramsay, "It would be very hard for me to be in it when I'm exec producing. I want to give those chefs the security of 'I've got your back. I know what you're going through and I'm in your corner. I want you to shine. Don't be scared of vulnerability. And most importantly, forget we're there. I know it's an intrusion on your privacy and getting underneath your skin, but I promise you, it'll be worth it.'"

The concept of a series following chefs chasing or keeping a Michelin Star is not new to Ramsay. In 1999, he starred in a British TV series, *Ramsay's Boiling Point*, in an effort to earn his first three Michelin Stars. "I remember having long chats with Tony Bourdain about the importance of showing the real inside of the industry," says Ramsay. "For two and a half decades, I've been dreaming of this kind of format that gives you the nitty-gritty, highfalutin, compact insight as to what's at stake when kids decide to open a restaurant and the impact it has on their families and their lives."

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How important is a Michelin Star to a restaurant? "Here you see the Super Bowl, the NBA, and the Soccer World Cup coming to the US next year," says Ramsay, "but the restaurant business is as high octane as any sport. It's how we raise the bar to create memories in restaurants that, if you get right, can last a lifetime."

And what's Chef Ramsay's meal of a lifetime? "We never wanted our children to become food snobs," he says. "We didn't want them to think that eating in one, two, three-star restaurants would be their go-to. So, 10 years ago, I took the family to Restaurant Gordon Ramsay to celebrate Megan's Sweet 16th birthday and her SAT exam results. It was the first time we'd all sat together in Gordon Ramsay in 15 years. After the first bite, she turned to me and said, 'Daddy, I get it. I understand the sacrifice.' And I'll take that with me to the grave."

Knife Edge: Chasing Michelin Stars follows the fates of chefs at some of the world's most celebrated restaurants to determine if they will win, maintain, or lose their precious Michelin Star over the course of the year-long Michelin Guide season. (Restaurants represented include New York: Coqadaq, Musket Room, Noksu; Chicago: Feld, Cariño, Esmé; California: Pasta|Bar, Pasjoli, The Harbor House; UK: Wilson's, Caractère, House; Mexico: Máximo, Em; Italy: Ferdy Wild, Krèsios; and the Nordics: Knystaforsen, Jordnaer, Aure.)



The rewards for culinary perfection are great, and only the very best will secure their spot on the Michelin Guide's exclusive list. Being a Michelin Guide inspector is like working for the CIA. No one knows their identity except their spouses. They change names, phone numbers, and emails constantly, trying to leave no trace. They visit restaurants several times to ensure their evaluation is thorough and objective. The only hint is that the inspector always arrives alone, so chefs pay close attention to solo diners.

I asked Chef Ramsay, when he goes to a restaurant to dine, do they treat him like a Michelin inspector? He said, "It has become a bit of a nightmare, and I'm not being ungrateful. It's just that I'll order a great appetizer, a wonderful entrée, and a couple of desserts, but then the chef spills his beans by coming up with four or five other plates that by the time you get to your entrée, you just wonder, 'Why did you not tell me you were going to send all this food? Because I wouldn't have ordered that, I would have gone for that.' My mum taught me not to waste anything, so I have to eat everything those chefs send out to me."

"I am the luckiest diner in the world," says Ramsay, "and the way I get treated is extraordinary, but the only thing they want to ask me when I step into a restaurant, 'Is there a f***king TV crew with you?' I say, 'No, there's no TV crew. I'm on my own.' And then, when they send out the food, you don't want them ass-kissing you, wanting to know how you liked it so they can say, 'Gordon Ramsay loved my meal.' The only thing I want in these restaurants is the check, but they are so freaking generous. 'No, no, it's on me,' they say. I answer, 'No, you're in business. You've got to make money to survive.' And let's be honest, if you booked a flight today to fly to London and you didn't show and you're paying \$1,000, they just fill that seat. In a restaurant, you don't get your dollars back. If that seat's empty, it's gone. So, I don't want freebies. I want to pay the check, because I know how important it is to survive financially. I'm grateful for any freebies, but I need the check."



I asked the three-star Michelin chef, what is the most defining quality that separates a Michelin chef from the rest? He said, “Consistency. Consistency is built up with layers of discipline, relentless drive, and absolute discipline. You need to listen to customers. If there’s one thing I’ve done over the last 25 years, it’s listen to customers. It’s not about massaging your ego as a chef, because what you cook is what they want. No, listen to customers. They don’t ring you up and say, ‘By the way, Gordon, I’m not coming back.’ They just don’t come back. You need to understand that those customers vote with their feet, and you need to listen to them. And that’s something that I understood early on in life.”

I wondered, is losing a Michelin Star worse than losing a spouse? “Oh shit,” he grinned. “I think losing a Michelin Star is cheaper than losing a spouse. The good news is you can win a star back. You can’t win your f**king spouse back.” And then I asked, is gaining a star better than being in love? He laughed, “I would say gaining a star is equally as exciting as being in love, except that your lover judges you every time you’re in bed. The Michelin inspector only judges you once a year.”

The Michelin Star is the most prestigious and elusive culinary award in the world, recognizing the finest ingredients cooked to the highest possible standards. Over his career, Chef Gordon Ramsay’s restaurants have been awarded a staggering total of 17 Michelin Stars, and he has held as many as eight stars at one time, though the exact number fluctuates as stars are awarded and lost. In 1994, before he was 30 years old, Ramsay earned his first Michelin Star for his London restaurant, Aubergine. Gordon Ramsay’s flagship restaurant, Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, currently has three Michelin Stars; Le Pressoir d’Argent has two; Pétrus by Gordon Ramsay, Restaurant 1890, and au Trianon each have one.

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Scottish by birth, Chef Gordon Ramsay was brought up in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, and initially wanted to be a professional footballer. [In the UK, “football” refers to soccer.] However, an injury prematurely put an end to any hopes of a promising athletic career, so Ramsay returned to college to complete a course in hotel management. He then trained with some of the world’s leading chefs, including Albert Roux and Marco Pierre White in London, and Guy Savoy and Joël Robuchon in France. In 1993, he became the head chef at London’s Aubergine restaurant and by 1996 had earned two Michelin Stars for the eatery. He insists that he is far from being the sole reason for the stars he’s earned. “The stars are not just for the chef but also for the staff, who are equally as focused as the owner,” he says.

In 1998, at the age of 35, Ramsay branched out on his own to set up his first wholly owned and namesake restaurant, Restaurant Gordon Ramsay, which quickly received the most prestigious accolade in the culinary world: three Michelin Stars. Today, Restaurant Gordon Ramsay is London’s longest-running restaurant to hold this award, and Ramsay is one of only four chefs in the UK to maintain three stars. Gordon also holds a Michelin Star at his other London restaurant, Pétrus, in Knightsbridge. In addition to his stars in the UK, Gordon holds two stars at Le Pressoir d’Argent in Bordeaux and one star at Gordon Ramsay au Trianon in Versailles. Pétrus opened in 1999 and was the recipient of two stars in just seven months after opening.



Over the next decade, Ramsay opened several other restaurants in the London area which were awarded Michelin Stars. In 2001, Ramsay took his brand outside Britain, starting with Verre in Dubai and followed by New York's Gordon Ramsay at The London. Currently, his restaurant group stretches to Britain, the United States (he has five in Las Vegas alone), Shanghai, South Korea, Malaysia, France, Dubai, Singapore, and Thailand.

I wondered, with all these stars, what was the worst meal he ever cooked? "I had a landlord in France, and I was trying to get her to give me a couple of months rent-free because I was desperate for tuition and had no money to pay my rent," he said. "I made her a risotto with which I thought I could woo her, but it was f**king undercooked by about four minutes. She started complaining and tasted bits of grit in her teeth. I didn't get the rent reduction, and I didn't get her to devour the risotto. It was the worst time and the only time I've ever f**ked up a risotto."

What was the worst meal he ever ate? "I was in Hawaii looking at some incredible beef," he said, "and we had to castrate these young calves and eat cow testicles and fry them. I swear to God. I don't know if you've ever eaten testicles, but these cow testicles were slightly bitter, spongy. They were dabbled in garlic powder and onion powder, and then shallow-fried in a cast iron pan. They were disgusting."

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So, is there anything he still needs to do that he hasn't? He said, "I've got one burning desire left. We won two Michelin Stars in Bordeaux ten years ago, and the ultimate is three stars. The only thing I've ever wanted to do on the back of winning three stars in London is take three stars to France to stick it to the French, to say that we are as good as you. We can produce wine in Kent and bring it to Bordeaux. We can cook lobsters from the west coast of Scotland and devour them in the middle of France. So yes, f**k the French."

And what do you want your legacy to be, I asked. He looked aghast. "That means you think I'm nearly dead?" I explained I meant in perhaps 35 years from now, "My legacy? 'Don't eat shit. Life's too short to eat shit.'"

So, with all his accolades, I wondered, what does it mean to be a real chef? "It means the world to cook and master your craft in a way that it gets propelled on the small screen, but no one really understands what kind of journey led to that monumental dish. It's years of drive, persistence, and energy to get to where you have. Just because you arrive on somebody's screen, they think it's an overnight success. It is a marathon, and something that I continue to still work on." •

GORDON RAMSAY



STREAMING: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2025

KNIFE EDGE
CHASING MICHELIN STARS

Hosted by Food Expert Jesse Burgess