

Ash Heeger chats about Netflix cooking show *The Final Table*

 By [Ruth Cooper](#)

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South African Chef Ash Heeger, of restaurant Riverine Rabbit (formerly know as ASH), recently competed in Netflix's new cooking show, *The Final Table*. The global culinary competition sees 12 teams of two chefs from around the world cook the national dishes of Mexico, Spain, England, Brazil, France, Japan, the US, India, and Italy.

The chefs were judged by celebrity ambassadors and food critics from nine countries around the world including Dax Shepard, Hasan Minhaj, and Alessandra Ambrosio. *The Final Table* launches globally on Netflix tonight. We got in touch with Ash to find out more.



▣ ***How did you prepare for a cooking show like *The Final Table*, can one prepare?***

It's impossible to prepare for something when you have no idea what it is you're in for. When I flew to Los Angeles, I still had no idea what the format of the competition would even be.

▣ ***Tell us what *The Final Table* is about and your role on the show?***

My "role" on the show was like everyone else's. We, the contestants, were individually selected from around the world to compete in the most extreme cooking competition the world has seen thus far.

Over 10 episodes on *The Final Table*, myself and 23 other chefs cook the national dish from a specific country, starting with Mexico. Those who land in the bottom of the national dish challenge are forced to cook for one of the most respected chefs of that country to stay in the competition.

▣ ***How did you come to be on the show?***

I was head-hunted by Netflix.

▣ ***What was the response like to your cooking on the show?***

You'll have to wait and see.

▣ ***How did you handle the pressure?***

I've lived under immense pressure my entire career. This experience was no different. It's easy to forget that after filming the show would appear on Netflix. It was just about the cooking.

▣ ***Which of the judges were you most excited to meet?***

All of the judges are demi-gods in my opinion. I was particularly excited to meet Enrique Elvera. He is right up there for me.



■ **What are your thoughts on cooking shows and the cult of the celebrity chef?**

I think the “celebrity chef cult” is nonsense. Any chef worth their salt doesn’t care about how much airtime or followers they have. It should be about food and nothing else.

■ **Are you watching any cooking shows on Netflix right now?**

Like I said I prefer to watch something else after busting my chops all day. I’m a fan of *Chef’s Table*, *Ugly Delicious*, *No Reservations* and *Mind of a Chef*. My guilty pleasure to watch on Netflix is far too embarrassing to say out loud, so I’ll just keep that one to myself.

■ **How would you describe your style of cooking?**

Modern and playful. It’s a bit of me and my journey so far on a plate. I don’t fit comfortably into any box, nor do I think I should. My style is a little French, a little Asian, a little South African.



■ ***What would be your ultimate guilty pleasure when it comes to food?***

Oh, wow. I have a lot of guilty pleasures. Fat being the most revolting I think. I could just eat fat all day. Any animal. I'll take it.

■ ***If you could only eat one thing for the rest of your life what would it be?***

Fat. Kidding. Probably cheeseburgers to be honest. I am such a sucker for a burger.



■ ***Your favourite food memory?***

Too many to pick from I'm afraid! If I had to relive a single meal, it would be sitting on a tiny pink plastic chair in the middle of Ho Chi Minh City. It was one of the most delicious meals I have ever had the pleasure of eating and possibly one of the

most simple. The place is called Quan An Co Lieng.

▣ ***What would you be doing if you weren't a chef?***

I haven't a clue. I've never so much as given it a moment of thought before. I decided I wanted to be a chef when I was nine. Probably something high octane. Something in law enforcement maybe?

▣ ***What would be your top food trends for 2019?***

Seeing chefs sourcing local and sustainable produce and supporting small local communities should be the trendiest trend of 2019.

▣ ***Is there any food trend or fad that you are not a fan of?***

I don't really buy into any food trend, to be honest.

▣ ***Favourite emoji?***

I use the shaka emoji the most I reckon.

For more go to www.netflix.com/thefinaltable.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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