



Amanda Freitag is a judge on Chopped, has battled Bobby Flay on Iron Chef America, and she competed for the title of America's Next Iron Chef.

When she was growing up in New Jersey, Amanda's passion for food was fostered by everyone from her grandparents to her high school home economics teacher. They encouraged her to pursue a cooking career and to enroll at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. After she graduated from culinary school, Amanda's first position in a New York City kitchen was as rotisseur and garde manger at Vong under the guidance of Jean-Georges Vongerichten. It was there that she was introduced to marrying French technique with Southeast Asian ingredients and flavors.

In 1994, Amanda began working with Chef Diane Forley at Verbena, where she rose quickly through the ranks to become the restaurant's chef de cuisine. Forley taught Amanda the importance of using local, organic ingredients and introduced her to the Union Square Greenmarket. During her time at Verbena, Amanda realized how much she had yet to learn about the culinary world, and in 1999 she traveled extensively through France and Italy to explore the bountiful markets and progressive restaurant scenes.

While in Paris, she spent two weeks working under Chef Alain Passard at his venerable Arpège restaurant. While her time there was short, the lessons she learned were life-changing. At Arpège, Passard insisted on the freshest ingredients, so there was nothing left in the walk-in refrigerators at the end of service besides butter. This eye-opening experience helped Amanda to further develop her deep appreciation of superlative ingredients and the flavors of the Mediterranean region.

Upon returning to New York, Amanda worked at some of the city's most-popular restaurants, including Cesca, where she cooked alongside Tom Valenti as his chef de cuisine and earned two stars from The New York Times. Following Cesca, Amanda accepted the position of executive chef at Gusto in the West Village, where her food was met with critical acclaim.

In January 2008, Amanda took over as the executive chef at The Harrison in Tribeca. Over the three years that she helmed the kitchen, The Harrison received numerous accolades from local and national media, including a two-star review from The New York Times.

Amanda's first cookbook, *The Chef Next Door: A Pro Chef's Recipes for Fun, Fearless Home Cooking*, was released in September 2015. When she is not in the kitchen, Amanda enjoys traveling the world and collecting restaurant menus to add to her ever-growing collection.