

PALATE PARTY'S ROBYN ALMODOVAR WINS *CHOPPED*, PLANS POP-UP AT KITCHEN 305

BY LAINE DOSS

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Tuesday's episode of *Chopped*, the Food Network show that has chefs making meals out of unlikely mystery baskets filled with things like fresh squid and Pop Rocks, was a nail biter. **One of South Florida's own, Robyn Almodovar**, went up against three seasoned chefs with long pedigrees for the title of *Chopped* champion and \$10,000.

While at first the other chefs seemed to snicker at the owner of **Palate Party** food truck, they shut up after judges Geoffrey Zakarian, Marc Murphy, and Amanda Freitag sang the chef's praises, with Zakarian telling Almodovar that she "cooked her truck off" and that he admired her because "she's not wasting a minute."

In the last round, Almodovar faced off head-to-head against Four Seasons Chicago's executive chef Stephen Wambach. Almodovar found her groove and Wambach found humility and respect for the diminutive powerhouse. In the end, it was the food truck chef's fried bread pudding with a strawberry/caramelized onion reduction that won the day.

Almodovar says that her *Chopped* experience was "one of the hardest things that I ever had to do." The chef, who had previously been on *Hell's Kitchen*, said that this Food Network show was even more nerve wracking than having Gordon Ramsay scream at her. "The two shows are like apples and oranges. *Hell's kitchen* you're nervous the first eight hours. Then you go to sleep you wake up you get nervous again he work in the kitchen to get nervous again and there is that adapting period. On *Chopped* there isn't enough time to adapt. It's sink or swim. Sometimes you sink sometimes you swim. Everyone at home has to see if I made it to shore or if I drowned in the ocean."



Fresh off her victory, Almodovar is planning Supper Club Thursdays at **Kitchen 305** inside the Newport Beachside Hotel & Resort in Sunny Isles Beach. Starting July 23, chef Almodovar will host weekly dinners every Thursday evening for eight weeks, through August 11. Almodovar says that the pop-up series is going to be a great time. "It's a party in your mouth. I am bringing in culinarians that I have worked with in the past. There also might be surprise guest chefs from previous Hell's Kitchen, Chopped or Cut Throat Kitchen episodes. It's going to be a time where I will do some dishes from past TV shows to give the public an opportunity to taste creations from those moments of my life."

Each week, chef Almodovar will design and prepare a new three-course meal for guests to experience. For the three-course meal, guests can choose between appetizer signatures like slow braised meatballs, with homemade ricotta cheese, pickled shallot, ricotta, and Sunday's gravy; deep fried egg salad with frisee, bacon lardon and sherry vinaigrette; and crud of fresh branzino with blood orange vinaigrette, black garlic, crispy shallots, and harissa oil.

The menu will change, but sample entrée selections include: duck confit pappardelle with shaved ricotta ensalada and broccolini; fisherman's stew with, mussels, fresh fish of the day, and ugly bread; and roasted half chicken, with crispy potatoes, caramelized onions, eggplant caviar, and roasted garlic au jus.

Dessert options include deep fried bread puddin' with homemade chocolate hazelnut ice cream and cookie crumble; donut peach and boysenberry pie in a can; and deconstructed Mississippi mud pie.

In addition to the meal, the chef will host a specialty lounge area complete with a paired hors d'oeuvre and cocktail menu. The lounge menu will include signature dishes such as fritto misto of root vegetables and mixed seafood with Sunday's gravy and lemon aioli (\$16), and porcini mushroom risotto balls with Pecorino Romano and pomodoro sauce (\$11).

The three-course pop-up is \$55 per person, not including tax, gratuity, and Eventbrite fee (where applicable). Dinner reservations start at 5:30 p.m. each Thursday. Lounge bites and cocktails are additional. Tickets can be purchased on [Eventbrite](#) or by calling 305-749-2110.

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