


Top Chef Recap: Carrie'd Away

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Hey Trashies! Happy New Year!

This is SnoopK8, filling in again for J-Mo. I hope you all had magical holiday season filled with champagne and unicorns. What better way to nurse your holiday hangover than with some raw seafood? It's time for *Top Chef*!

Last time: The cheffies had to feed 500 LSU students. Corn-fed Carrie made a thoroughly unappetizing cold broccoli salad which probably would have gotten her booted had she not had immunity. Illegal Carlos complained to the judges that PhillyDick Nick "stole" his oven and Nick whined about it endlessly like the giant baby he is. Justin DevilBear refused to pander to the college students' unsophisticated palettes and instead served them bland shrimp over flavorless mush. That earned him a trip to *Last Chance Kitchen* and an eventual descent into obscurity.

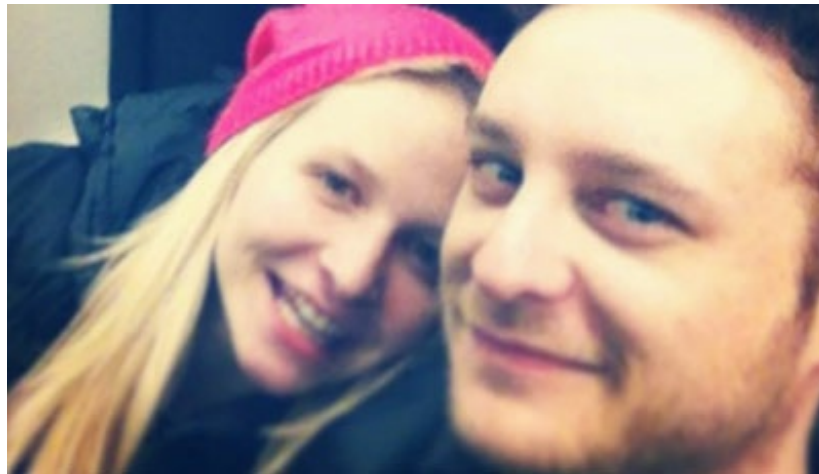


No one appreciates my genius

We open as usual in the stew room where the seven remaining chefs are toasting themselves for not getting kicked off yet. Nina says LSU was the most difficult challenge for her and being on the bottom was a reality check. She vows not to let it happen again. Carrie is sad that Justin is gone, but happy she doesn't have to compete with him any longer. To me, that means she thinks he's giant asshole and is happy not to have to put up with him anymore, but I may be projecting a little. They leave to go back to the "dorms," which, even though Nick was joking, is not so far from the truth.



At the chef dorms the next day, Second Chance Stephanie is on the phone with her boyfriend David, asking if he got her a fishing pole yet. He did not, but he is working on it. Between that and scavenging for mussels, it seems like seafood plays a big part in their relationship. I wonder if that includes tentacle porn.



Let's get cala-"maried"

Steph explains that she hired David as a line cook for her restaurant but she had a crush on him and would schedule herself to work every Saturday night so she could see him.

Her plan was successful because they have been together for two years and he stuck with her even though she was booted early from *Top Chef* first time around. Well, that was nice of him. Isn't that like the minimum you look for in a boyfriend? *"I like long walks on the beach, scavenging for shellfish and guys who won't leave me when I get kicked off Top Chef in the first round."*

Steph laments having to sleep on the top bunk, but says she's done well with that and in general. I'm glad to see her being positive for a change. So she is clearly being set up for the loser edit, right? We shall see, Trashies. We shall see.

Meanwhile, Nick is still bitching about last week's (unfounded?) oven-theft allegation.



Grumpy is a nice break from whiny

Well, more about the fact that Carlos complained to the judges about it. Nick calls that a bush league move, which it is, but also: shut up, Nick. He goes on to say "If you feel good at the end of the day about winning *Top Chef* by cooking like an asshole, god bless you. I'll cook with integrity and be a gentleman about it." I didn't realize the hallmark of a gentleman was crying like a little girl and not shutting the fuck up. What ever happened to the strong, silent type?

The chefs arrive at the *Top Chef* kitchen to find Padma and *Top Chef Masters* alumnus John Besh standing there with a huge bucket of live crawfish.



Ew. Those fuckers look like the water bugs (aka freakishly large cockroaches) that stalk me at work, except the crawfish are smaller.



I'm coming for youuuuuuuuu

The quickfire challenge is to put a “flavorful twist” on crawfish étouffée. Padma helpfully explains that *étouffer* in French means “to smother,” as in “Padma likes étouffer old-man balls with her face.” Besh says to think of étouffée as a rustic stew served over rice. He says the key is to coax as much flavor out of the crawdads as possible. They will have 45 minutes and the winner gets immunity.

Unfortunately, Stephanie is allergic to certain kinds of seafood, like the kind that turns red in water and looks like a giant cockroach. To her credit, she is able to complete the challenge without (much) whining. I can think of a few current (cough NICK cough) and past (Josie) contestants who would complain from now until the end of time how they had such a huge disadvantage by not being able to taste the food they were cooking. So kudos, Steph.

After the obligatory crawfish mutilation montage, we check in to see what the kids are up to.



Oh, the crawmanity!

Nina's making homemade pasta. Carlos never heard of étouffée so he's just going to make a version of shrimp soup with crawfish instead. Nick is going to "smother" (i.e. wrap) his crawfish with Napa cabbage, which I don't think is very étouffée-y, but whatever. Atypical Shirley is making spicy Singapore-style étouffée which she cooks for her husband all the time. Huskey's going Korean and says crawfish are poor man's lobster and he is gonna try his best to get as much flavor out of the shells as possible.

Nick offers to taste Steph's dish for seasoning, which is actually very nice of him. Maybe he is a gentleman after all. He interviews that he would do anything for Steph, because she is his roommate and like his little sister. But, he says, if it were Carlos who had a seafood allergy, he should probably ask someone else. Sigh. Not that I don't think Carlos is a major dick, but shut up, Nick. The crawfish agree with me, because one of them bites him. LOL.

Shirley is nervous because she's the only one who made rice and she thinks maybe she took the challenge too literally. Which reminds me of this *Onion story*.

Time for the tasting.

Nina's pici pasta with crawfish tomato sauce is a big hit, with Padma calling it "spicy and nice." Besh says the noodles are great.



Carrie made Spanish style broth and both the judges ask if there is wine in it. I don't think they are that impressed with it because they just say "thank you" after tasting it.



Nick's NapaWraps™ is up next and Padma asks what is making it so sweet. Answer: brandy and a shit-ton of corn (of course).



Nick interviews that he doesn't think Padma likes any of his food because he's lost like every Quickfire ever. Has he won anything yet? I can't remember. I can't remember the days when he was just a random face in the crowd and not a whiny douche.

Shirley's dish looks delish and Padma is excited to get some rice. Besh could eat a whole bowl of it.



Padma thinks Brian's tastes really nice.



They pull up to Carlos' station to find he has not made an étouffée, but a version of his mom's shrimp soup.



Padma asks what exactly is being smothered in this dish. Carlos: What is this 'smother' you speak of? Padma gets all offended and says, "Étouffer in French means LITERALLY 'to smother.'"



It's also French for "smug bitch"



I'll literally smother you

Carlos knows he's fucked, so he just croaks out something about crispy chorizo.

Finally, Steph presents her crawfish bisque and explains about her crawfish allergy. She assures them that she trusted Nick enough to let him taste her food in her place.



Least fave dishes belong to Carrie (muddled flavors, wine didn't cook out); Nick (great dish, but not the étouffée Besh was looking for); Steph (good flavor, but more of a bisque than an étouffée) and finally, Carlos (not an étouffée whatsoever!).

Favorites: Brian (great sauce; took it to another level); Nina (extracted great flavor, sauce coated the noodles perfectly and pasta was handmade); Shirley (velvety texture, pronounced flavor). And the winner is... Shirley! She has immunity for the Elimination Challenge...

...Which is: Make a dish for the Louisiana Seafood Show that highlights at least two types of Gulf seafood. They will be serving 1,000 200 guests at a party by the Mississippi River. They get three hours to cook on-site tomorrow.

Tonight, as a special treat, they are going to Besh's house on the bayou for dinner.



They eat, drink and meet Besh's wife, whom he's known since kindergarten. He asks the chefs the best and worst things about being on *Top Chef*. Steph says getting kicked off last year gave her "a pretty low cooking self esteem," (also terrible grammar) but she is feeling prouder of her cooking since she's had some successes this season. Besh agrees that sometimes the best chefs do the worst because they over-think everything. Nina is super excited to be at Chez Besh and wants to move into his third-floor bedroom and have Beshcakes for breakfast.

The next day, they head to party venue which is under a tent by the river. There is a seafood truck and they reenact the *Hunger Games* to grab their seafood of choice.



May the odds be ever in your flavor

Nina and Shirley are doing ceviches. Nick is doing oysters three different ways. Huskey's doing a grilled swordfish, Steph, fried oysters. Carrie is inexplicably going to hack up her flounder and make into a fritter and Carlos is serving amberjack crudo. He says that he f'ed up in Restaurant Wars by not cutting his fish thinly enough, but now he knows better. Unfortunately, he forgot to bring a really sharp knife.

He asks Nick if Nick has a sushi knife he can borrow. That seems kind of ballsy considering what went down between the two of them last time. Nick interviews, "Seriously? You want to do sashimi. Shouldn't you have a sharp enough knife? Why do you need mine?" Because he just wants to get close to you, Nick. As we all do. Once again, it's not that he's wrong, but, say it with me: shut up, Nick.

Of course Carlos who is turning into a bigger dick by the second, interviews, "Nick, stop thinking about yourself and start thinking about everyone else." Because I guess Nick is responsible for making sure Carlos has everything he needs to win, like a *knife that cuts*.

Everybody is pressed for time and has to make adjustments. Nick was going to use canned ~~snot~~ oysters, but they are not briny enough.



So now he has to shuck a bunch of fresh oysters.



It's super time consuming and he still has to make oyster juice, oyster sauce, oyster foam, oyster brulée, oyster consommé, oyster paste, etc.

Carrie's struggling to finish her fritters and Shirley interviews that she can't believe that Carrie is taking a fresh ingredient and making into a gloppy, ol' fried mess. Carrie's rationalization is that she wants to show off technique, but she's basically making flounder tots, no?

Carlos is still having problems slicing his fish so Nick finally relents and lets him borrow a knife.



He warns Carlos to take good care of it, because the knife was a wedding present and Nick needs to cuddle with it when he is crying himself to sleep at night. Carlos decides to cut the pieces once and then cut them in half again. So much fish, so little time.

Party guests begin arriving. The judges show up and Padma seems to have recovered from the soup-not-étouffée crisis of 2013. She asks Besh what he thinks are the drawbacks of today's competition. Besh says worrying about how to serve 200 people rather than how to win the competition will mess you up every time. Daddy Tom says if he were competing, he would ask himself how to make the best food possible. He'd rather fail big than be stuck in the middle his whole life.

Stephanie didn't think about plating ahead of time, so she is struggling to keep up with the growing line.



She is batch-frying her oysters so they will stay consistent and crunchy. She's a little stressed, but handling it okay.

Huskey says some people took the safe route by making ceviche, but he wants to hit a home run with his grilled swordfish.



Besh says Huskey did a great job cooking the fish. Daddy Tom agrees that it is delish.

Hughnibrow thinks that Nick's oyster trio showed good technique, but lacked acid.



Some random woman says she didn't like Nick's "soup," but her companion gives him points because he always gives out extra points for foam...



...in his mouth

Daddy Tom is baffled by Carrie's croquettes. He can't fathom why she would puree fresh fish like she did.



I'm not a chef, but aren't "pickled cucumbers" just... "pickles"?

Besh says the cucumber salad on top is good and Tom snarks that if it were the Louisiana Cucumber Council she would be the clear winner. They toast to cucumbers.

Shirley serves the judges her ceviche. She used pecans for crunch because she's in the south, of course. They mostly like it.



Nina's wahoo ceviche gets compliments. Besh says it has great flavors.



Carlos is up next.



Hughnibrow says his fish needs better seasoning, a pinch of *fleur de sel* and some acid. Daddy Tom says the flavors are okay, but it's not fishy enough.

Steph is still frying. She interviews that she doesn't want to go home on a Besh challenge because she fucked up two previous challenges with him. She wants to blow this one out of the water. Not sure if she talking about the challenge or Besh.



The judges overall seem happy and say the dishes mostly highlighted the food and represented the chefs well.

Nick goes to get his knife from Carlos and finds it abandoned and covered in “dried, crusty pieces of fish.” He’s mad, which I don’t blame him for, but he is still whining.



I want my mommmmmmmmm

Nina agrees that it’s a dick move because one’s knife is like an extension of one’s self. She would be angry too. I would not want Nina pissed at me. Nick “confronts” Carlos and Carlos apologizes, saying he’ll clean it. But it’s too late because Nick already cleaned it.



Dude, this knife is my wife life

Carlos smirks in an interview that he understands why Nick would be mad. He didn't have time to clean the knife, he knows it's his fault, but they're there to compete. Apparently "compete" means show up unprepared, borrow someone's shit and leave it covered in fish bits.

Nick is still sobbing about it to Huskey, saying "if you give me a chance, I'll turn into a monster."



Rawr!

He interviews that he can turn from a nice guy to an evil guy pretty quickly, and he's not going to trust Carlos or anyone anymore. And just *wait* till you see what he writes in his journal about it.

This week's fake-out consists of Steph talking to Nina about Padma's ponytail.

She speculates about what would happen if Steph went up to Padma and told her she looked great, but she had a hair out of place. I can tell you. Padma would snap her neck, that's what would happen. How do you think she really got that scar?

In the Stew Room, Huskey is excited he got to follow the footsteps of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn by cooking next to the mighty Mississippi. I'm sure it went down exactly as Twain described it.

The TV of Truth comes on. Padma says all in all, it was a beautiful day at the Seafood fest. Besh says they all mostly executed the challenge. Of course Daddy Tom has to be contrary and says the dishes were good, but he wanted to see more of the seafood. Besh was disappointed by all the safe ceviche. Padma says if she HAD to choke down a bunch of ceviche, her favorite was Nina's. Besh praises Nina's wahoo (not a euphemism), and says Shirley's ceviche was also solid. They also liked Brian's sauce and are happy he actually cooked his food.

Hughnibrow liked Steph's oysters and Daddy Tom says they were done perfectly. Back in the stew room, Steph's "mind is blown." As far as Carlos' dish, Besh enjoyed the shrimp, peaches and habanero, but couldn't taste the fish. Daddy Tom says Carlos basically served fruit salad with some fish in it. Nick's dish had issues. Daddy Tom had a problem with putting foam on top of soup and Hughnibrow just thinks the whole thing was flat.

Daddy Tom is STILL mad about Carrie's fritters. He said pureeing doesn't show the integrity of the fish. It could have been "anything" in there. The TV goes off and Padma comes in to ask for Steph, Nina and Brian. Obviously they are the top three.



Smile, guys, you're on top

Steph is the winner and is really happy to have finally proven herself in front of Besh. And it was a seafood challenge, Steph, so I'm sure your BF will be excited by that.

Bottom three: Nick, Carrie, Carlos.



Carrie tries to defend herself by saying she wanted to do a play on fish & chips, but thought that would be too simple, so she decided to cure the flounder like baccala and turn it into a fritter. Padma says the croquette was perfectly executed, but you can no longer taste the fish. Daddy asks if she thinks that was the best way to highlight the fish flavor. She says she wanted to show technique, but Daddy Tom growls that it was not a technique challenge.

Carlos' peach and shrimp salsa was tasty, but the piece of fish was tiny. Carlos says he wanted to be generous with the peach because it was so good. Hughnibrow concedes that Carlos won the peach challenge, but unfortunately, he was competing in a seafood challenge.

Finally, Besh enjoyed Nick's roasted oysters, but Hughnibrow had issues with the texture and lack of acid. Daddy Tom says the dish was too soft and needed a crunchy component. Nick argues he used diced apples, but Daddy Tom says they were too small to make a difference. Besh says Nick elevated the oysters, but the amberjack felt thrown in.

They are sent away so the judges can deliberate.

In the stew room Nina asks how it went and Carrie snots, "How do you think it went?" It was her first time on the bottom and Nina says she popped her cherry.

So bottom line, Carrie is the big loser and will pack her knives. Padma puts on her fake sympathy voice when she delivers the news and after they all leave, she says "I'm gonna MISS her in the kitchen." Oh sure you are, Scar. As long as she doesn't ever serve you soup instead of étouffée.

Carrie says she doesn't feel like she deserves to go home, because she put herself out there for this challenge and it's sad. But she had a great experience and is proud to have made it to the top seven.

Next week, Jacques Pepin is back and it looks like he may spark an international incident.

Last Chance Kitchen. Louis is surprised to see Carrie, as he had expected her to end up in the final three. Carrie says she respects Louis, but it's her time to shine.

The challenge is to make a dish using broccoli.



Who knew that broccoli could be so menacing

Carrie makes homemade raviolis filled with roasted broccoli. Daddy Tom likes it, but not enough for it to beat Louis' scotch salmon with broccoli cooked three ways. So Carrie's done for good and Louis has now won five LCK challenges in a row. He needs just three more to end up back in the main competition. Can he do it???

So, Trashies, what did you think of this ep? Did Carrie deserve to go home or should it have been Nick or Carlos? I feel like she's been sliding lately, but I did like her better than either of those two. I know I was hard on Nick this week, and to be fair, I don't really hate him in the Mike Isabella sense, but he needs to stop being such a pussy. And did anyone else foresee Carlos becoming such a jerkweed? He seemed so nice in the beginning. Oh, and I'm glad to see Stephanie win one, since she is growing on me.

Well, that's it. Thanks so much for reading. I think J-Mo will be back with you next week. Until then, have a good one!

xoxo,

SnoopK8

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