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**Chef Virginia Willis competes with fellow Beard Award winners on
Season Premiere of Alex vs. America
April 16 on Food Network**



(Atlanta GA) Chef Virginia Willis faces off in one of the fiercest culinary competitions on TV when she takes on fellow James-Beard Award-winning chefs on the season premiere of the hit primetime series [Alex vs. America, Sunday, April 16 on Food Network](#).

Competition is nothing new for Virginia who has competed on *Chopped* and served as a judge on *Throwdown with Bobby Flay*, but she readily admits the invitation to compete against two other powerhouse Beard-award winners was intriguing and a little daunting as well.

“When I agreed to participate, I knew I would be going head-to-head with some of the best chefs in America,” said Virginia. Virginia says she was particularly honored to be chosen to appear on the episode featuring James Beard Award winners because that recognition is one of the highlights of her career. Virginia, who received a James Beard Foundation Award for her cookbook, “Lighten Up, Y’all” is a French-trained chef who has cooked in Michelin rated restaurants and managed kitchens for Martha Stewart, Bobby Flay and others.

She will be competing against chefs Jonathan Sawyer and Nate Appleman. Sawyer is chef owner at Adorn Bar and Restaurant at the Four Seasons Hotel in Chicago. He is a former Food and Wine Best New Chef and appears frequently on Food Network programs. Appleman is also a Food and Wine Best New Chef recipient as well as a Beard Foundation Rising Chef award-winner. He is a consultant, former restaurant owner, cookbook author and Food Network regular.

In *Alex vs. America*, acclaimed chef and Food Network staple Alex Guarnaschelli competes against three culinary superstars at the same time over two rounds. The competitors hail from across the United States but share the same mastery of a culinary genre, one that they have spent endless hours in their own kitchens perfecting and which will be tested in an effort to take down Alex. At the start of each battle, host Eric Adjepong presents Alex and the competitors with the culinary theme for their dishes. In the first round, the competitors can work together to select ingredients and even decide how much time goes on the clock. Each dish undergoes a blind tasting from two judges well-versed in the episodic theme, with only the top three chefs advancing to the next round and the least successful challenger sent home - even if it is Alex. Judges Stephanie Izard and Kwame Onwauchi have the challenging task of naming a winner.

"I wanted to challenge myself with this incredible opportunity that I was given to test myself!" says Virginia. "One thing I have said for a very long time is that you can be certain that you will fail if you don't try."



About Virginia Willis

Virginia Willis is a James Beard award-winning cookbook author, television personality, content creator, motivational speaker, LGBTQ icon, and social media influencer.

Georgia born French-trained chef Virginia Willis has foraged for berries in the Alaskan wilderness, harvested capers in the shadow of a smoldering volcano in Sicily, and executed the food styling for a Superbowl commercial seen by over 160 million people.

Beginning in 2019 Virginia lost 65 pounds and has kept it off for over 2 1/2 years. Her health journey has been documented in *Eating Well* magazine, *All Recipes* magazine, AARP, and as a cover story for *Woman's World*.

She is a chef instructor for the Food Network Kitchen, a James Beard award-winning cookbook author, and member of the Seafood Watch Blue Ribbon Task Force. Her cookbooks include **Fresh Start; Secrets of the Southern Table; Lighten Up, Y'all; Bon Appétit, Y'all; Basic to Brilliant, Y'all; Okra**; and **Grits**. Learn more about Virginia and follow her good and good-for-you recipes and traveling exploits at www.viriniawillis.com.

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