



WITH
bryan and michael v.

Both master chefs and both insanely competitive, the Voltaggio brothers took sibling rivalry to a whole new level on Season 6. CIA-trained Bryan, the elder by just two years, is chef-owner of highly praised VOLT restaurant in Frederick, Maryland, while Michael has made his home across the country in Los Angeles, working in a series of top kitchens, most recently at the Dining Room at the Langham Hotel in Pasadena. Both were on top during the entire season, but it truly came down to the wire at the finale in Napa, where Michael's bold, wildly creative dishes won him the title of Top Chef.

What are you up to these days?

MICHAEL: Bryan's at McDonalds, working the French fry station. You're still doing that Bryan, right? Or did you move up to milk shake?

BRYAN: Oh, you're funny. Michael is working at Dairy Queen.

What was it like competing together? Have you always been competitive with each other?

BRYAN: We're friends and we're close, which was an advantage for us on the show. Obviously there was pressure because we were competing against each other, but there was also a level of support, which the other chef'testants didn't have.

MICHAEL: There's always a level of competition. We talk on the phone every day, and the first thing we say is, "What are you making today? How are you making that? Oh yeah? Well I'm making this." I want to make sure he's not doing something better than I am.

BRYAN: We're two brothers only two years apart, always one-upping each other. We're competitive by nature. We played a lot of sports growing up.

MICHAEL: He played soccer and I played football, which says something about us. You can tell Bryan's a little more feminine and I'm a little bit more masculine. Bryan, don't be mad.

What was it like to live together in such close quarters after all these years?

BRYAN: I was pretty excited about that. We're both chefs in different cities pretty far apart, and we hadn't been in the same city for the last fifteen years. It was really cool to be able to spend a good amount of time with him.

MICHAEL: We missed out on our twenties. We didn't go to college, we didn't party hard—we worked in the kitchen. So it was fun to let loose. We also had Mike I., who's a friend of mine. When the lights went out and the cameras were gone, we were like children, laughing and joking and throwing stuff at one another. It was like a slumber party each night.

How did you both keep focused on the cooking?

BRYAN: You're in Las Vegas, in this great house, and everyone wants to have a good time, so it's difficult. I thought about why I was there, which was to cook and compete and try to win. I spent a lot of time planning the next day, looking through my ingredient list and trying to remember dishes I wanted to put together.

MICHAEL: When you're in a competition like this there's no time for emotions. You need to wake up and be focused and get the job done. That's not the criteria for just the show—that's the criteria for what we do every day.

"It's nice to see each other do well. We're lucky we have a common interest, common career, common goals."

BRYAN



"If he's doing well, I want to do better. And if I'm doing well, he wants to do better. It's a driving force for both of us."

MICHAEL



What do you admire about each other's food and craft?

MICHAEL: Bryan is probably one of the most solid technicians I've ever seen. His basic skills are cleaner and more developed than most. Second to that—and Bryan, don't listen to this because your head's going to explode—he's not just a great cook, he's a great chef. He understands the business. I focused more on food my entire career; I've always been a great cook. I could learn a lot more about being a chef from Bryan.

BRYAN: As a result, Michael can do some pretty incredible things. He's done things that I've never seen applied to food. His craft is a little bit more modern. He's very innovative and definitely a trendsetter; that's really cool. And he's very driven.

What do you like to do when you're not cooking?

BRYAN: My cooks sleep on their days off. On my days off, I want to be outside because I spend so much time in the kitchen already. I spend time with my family, my two-year-old boy.

MICHAEL: It's important to do things outside of the kitchen so you have a life outside the kitchen and so you don't resent the fact that you spend sixteen hours a day behind a fire. I have two daughters; they are a priority.

Who would win in an arm-wrestling match?

BRYAN: Me.

MICHAEL: Bryan. But I would win a fight, hands down. Bryan has better form and tactic. Here's the thing: Bryan's like a trained boxer, and I'm just a street fighter. So he's going to get his licks in, and I'm just going to fight as dirty as I have to to win.