

King mom makes TV debut on MasterChef Canada

By Mark Pavilons

A love of home cooking has given a King City mom her 15 minutes of fame.

Carmela Campolargo was one of 50 top home cooks selected for the brand new culinary competition series, MasterChef Canada, which premieres on CTV Jan. 20 at 8 p.m.

The stay-at-home mom joins other amateur cooks that include a stand-up comedian, an opera singer, a tattoo artist, a stay-at-home dad and a female plumber.

Finalists compete for a \$100,000 cash prize and the title of the first-ever Canadian MasterChef.

Campolargo, a fan of the U.S. show, was watching TV when it announced auditions for the Canadian version. She said she turned to her family and they immediately gave her the thumbs-up. Then she just went for it.

She had dreamed of becoming a chef herself, but she put it on hold when she was diagnosed with MS at 25. That wasn't going to stop her now, however.

The audition and show was a wonderful experience, almost surreal.

It showcased her talent and really brought me out as a home cook. She was definitely in her own realm and renewed her passion.

She takes cooking for her family seriously and draws upon her Italian background to create some outstanding dishes.

She said she really wanted to do this for herself and to show her kids what we can accomplish when we put our minds to it.

I wanted to show my children don't let anything stop you," she said. It brought me out of my shell and I learned a lot.

Campolargo met an amazing group of people through the show.

She's holding a premier party at her home and she plans to watch the series with her family.

Her children ages 9, 8 and 6 already have bragging rights.

She may have to deal with her newfound stardom, but for now she's enjoying her enthusiasm for cooking. Perhaps we will one day find her at the helm of a new King restaurant.

Thousands of applicants from across the country participated in a nail-biting audition process.

We searched the country and are confident these top 50 home cooks are the best this country has to offer," said Phil King,

president, CTV programming and sports. The production team selected amateur chefs of all ages and vocations who are ready to showcase their passion, talent, and drive as they cook for the right to be the first-ever Canadian MasterChef.

Each home cook must present their signature dish to esteemed judges Michael Bonacini, Alvin Leung and Claudio Aprile. As friends and family cheer on the amateur cooks, only those with the most impressive dishes will be given the opportunity to move forward in the competition.