

Recipe used for show is all wrong

COOKING SHOW

**IRON CHEF USA:
HOLIDAY SHOWDOWN**
Star World (SCV Channel 18)
Wednesday, 8 pm

By **SUHAILA SULAIMAN**

IF YOU like watching TV Innovation commercials, you will enjoy Iron Chef USA.

The cooking show, an Americanised version of the Japanese-language cult cooking series titled Iron Chef, works like an hour-long commercial.

It is filled with campy actors who are all out to sell you something. In this case, the product is not some loose powder that gives you a "Natural Glow" or a miracle gel that trims your tummy in 45 minutes. It is chefs.

The show's concept is this: An oddball, called the Chairman, resides in a castle with humongous kitchens. He has four Iron Chefs — an American, an Asian, a French and an Italian — to tend to his gastronomical desires.

These four champions will battle any chef who is brave enough to challenge them.

A "cook-off" between the outsider and his chosen Iron Chef lasts one hour, during which five original dishes have to be prepared.

All must carry an ingredient

revealed only minutes before the race. It could be anything from seafood to chicken to a vegetable.

Afterwards, the Chairman's four guests will have a taste test to see who is the better cook.

Out of his cop uniform in the old television series, T.J. Hooker, and into a ridiculous glittery purple overcoat and frilly vest as the Chairman is actor William Shatner.

He says unreal things like "Turn up the heat!" and "Cooking is like a poem — and a promise", proving that it is hard to grow old gracefully after decades in Hollywood, and even harder to exercise discretion over what makes a good script.

In the second of the two "Showdown Specials" — airing at 8 pm this Wednesday on Star World (SCV Channel 18) — pedigree chef Marcus Samuelsson from New York's Aquavit challenges Iron Chef Italian Alessandro Stratta over dishes involving turkey.

The first special which aired in January had chef Kerry Simon of Las Vegas' Bellagio Hotel contesting the egoistical Iron Chef American Todd English over Dungeness crabs.

Given just an hour, the chefs' pace is frenetic. But you are not allowed to see the fine art of cooking involved despite the camera close-ups. Editing is a cut-and-paste job suited more



The show is way cheesy, and we're not talking about the ingredients used in the cooking. Iron Chef Italian Alessandro Stratta (left) of the Renoir Restaurant in Las Vegas is one of the contenders in the show.

for a WWF special than a cooking show.

During the cooking, a roving reporter and two commentators check out the action.

But instead of providing the viewer with facts about the ingredients and the different styles of gourmet cooking, they give absolutely useless comments like "Oh, he's got a flour thing going"

and "I guess he's into surf 'n' turf".

And as the studio audience egg on the contenders, some chefs ham it to the point of losing whatever credibility they have.

The whole arena cheapens their skills and talent, which is just the effect a TV innovation commercial has on its products.