

CULINARY BIO - Chef ALI HASSAN

Stand-up comedian and chef/owner of Montreal's Lime Catering Co., Ali is an entertainment force to be reckoned with - both on the stage and in the kitchen! His signature cooking style incorporates Indian influence into all kinds of contemporary menus, thereby creating truly innovative dishes and earning him notoriety in the Montreal culinary scene. Ali is also a cooking instructor whose inviting and engaging teaching style has made him a student favorite.

Growing up in Montreal, Ali was reluctantly drawn into cooking after rather hastily suggesting to his mother that her lunch sandwiches were "crap". To which she replied, "Well, perhaps you should make your own". Although his comment was immediately regrettable, he soon became the only kid in ninth grade making his own feta & black olive omelet sandwiches for lunch. The feeling was empowering. It would take another several years, however, for the real message to sink in (and for him to learn some manners with his mother)!

Fast-forward to 2000, Ali, now living in Chicago, was working as an IT consultant by day and a part-time line-chef by night. Now assured by the fact that cooking gave him more satisfaction than his consulting career ever could, he left his consulting firm, embraced the Chicago culinary scene, and started cooking professionally in 2001.

Returning to Montreal, Ali managed *Bombay Palace* restaurant and headed its catering arm. However, supervising others as they cooked proved to be a challenge. Inevitably he soon left to take a position as a chef himself, this time at a smaller restaurant – *Masala* - where he had the freedom to explore, design and develop his own menus.

Sometimes a job loss is the kick-start you need to follow your dreams. When the owner decided to scale down his catering efforts, Ali saw the opportunity to start his own catering company and the Lime Catering Co. was born.

Ali's uniquely creative menus are in constant demand from a variety of corporate and residential clients in and around Montreal. He has consulted for the Ritz-Carlton in Montreal, and has been handpicked to assist such great chefs as Vikram Vij (*Vij's*, Vancouver) and Suvir Saran (*Devi*, New York City) on their visits to the city. Ali's warm kitchen personality has also gained him a spot as a resident chef on the roster for CookDating.ca – a dating and cooking service for local singles.

He has written food articles for South Asian publications and now hosts his own on-air radio segment called *There's More to Life Than Hummus* on a Montreal radio station. To top it all off, Ali Hassan also works as a stand-up comic. His goal is to fuse his two greatest passions, comedy and cooking, to create an informative and entertaining cooking show - and there are interested production companies in Toronto and Ottawa who seem willing to oblige. In addition, Ali has been cast as a co-host on a show called *What's There to Eat*, which starts filming in April of 2009.

Culinary Highlights:

- Lime Catering Co., Montreal QC • Chef/Owner
- Restaurant Cash and Curry, Montreal QC • Chef/Owner
- Masala Restaurant, Montreal QC • Chef/General Manager
- Bombay Palace Restaurant, Montreal QC • General Manger
- Cooking Instructor, Montreal QC
- Profiled in *The Montreal Mirror*, *The Gazette*, *Global CH Television*, *CTV/CFCF-12*, *Sweetspot.ca*, *Watchmojo.com*, and *KidsChannel.ca*

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COMEDY BIO – Ali Hassan

This chef, caterer and cooking instructor burst onto the Montreal comedy scene in late April, 2006 with the intention of improving his crowd skills to become an extraordinary host of a comedic cooking show. Although his sights remain firmly fixed on this future show, he has also developed an intense connection to stand-up comedy along the way.

In his first 6 months on stage, Ali was: selected be part of a "*Best of the Open Mic 'ers*" night (July 2006); selected as a semi-finalist in the *YukYuk's Great Canadian Laugh-Off* competition (September 2006); and after just 1 month of improv, was the winner of a *Survivor Improv* night at the Theatre Ste-Catherine in Montreal (January 2007).

In the last 3 years, Ali has turned the heads of many Montreal veteran comics – opening for Daniel Tirado in his International Night of Comedy, opening for Massimo for his CD recording, and opening for international sensation Sugar Sammy on the last leg of his cross-Canadian tour. He made a splash at the renowned Nubian Show at *YukYuks* in Toronto and was invited to audition for *The Gurus of Comedy* tour - a 2-month American tour featuring talented Indo-American and Indo-Canadian comics.

In this short time frame he has also become a regular host and performer at both *The ComedyWorks* and *Ernie Butler's Comedy Nest* in Montreal, and at the *Absolute Comedy* chain in both Ottawa and Toronto. He has performed each year at *YukYuks Nubian Show* and has been called back a number of times to host the *Altdot Comedy Lounge* at the Rivoli in Toronto, a rare feat for an out-of-towner.

After winning Montreal's monthly *Best of Open Mic* (BOOM) competition three months in a row, he has also become the co-host and co-producer of this monthly event, which has rapidly become the place to be in Montreal on the last Sunday of every month.

In 2008, Ali co-produced and hosted the first ever, very successful Montreal production of the *We Aint Terrorists Comedy Show* in April; hosted and promoted the *Comedy in Colours* show featuring 9 of Montreal's best comics and finally, was invited to perform at

the historic, **first-ever** comedy festival in the Middle East – *The Amman Stand-Up Comedy Festival*, held in Jordan in December of 2008.

In 2009, Ali has started hosting his own culinary radio segment, *There's More to Life Than Hummus*, that airs weekly on Montreal radio. He has also been invited back to the Middle East for additional comedy shows. Back home, he will be opening for a Canadian legend, Joey Elias, for the recording of his comedy CD and performing in a two-man show at the Montreal Fringe Festival in June!

Comedy Highlights:

- Voted one of the TEN BEST comics in Montreal in the Montreal Mirror's *Best of Montreal* poll in 2008
- Co-producer and Host of a monthly comedy show, *BOOM!* (Best Of Open Mic) that encourages young local comics
- Performed at *the Amman Stand-Up Comedy Festival*, the first-ever comedy festival to take place in the Middle East
- Successfully promoted and hosted large-scale comedy shows, e.g. *Comedy in Colours* and *We Aint Terrorists*
- Profiled in *The Gazette*, *RCI (Radio-Canada International)* and *CBC Radio* for work as a local ground-breaking Muslim comic.