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BATTER UP! 13 new contestants compete to be TLC'S NEXT GREAT BAKER

Season 3 premieres Monday, November 26 at 9pm ET/PT

The heat is on - Buddy "Cake Boss" Valastro has selected a brand-new "bakers dozen" of aspiring pastry chefs to mix it up in the third season of TLC's hit competition show NEXT GREAT BAKER. The 13 crafty cake artists are each after the sweet prize of \$100,000, a feature in Redbook Magazine, and a chance to work side-by-side with Buddy and his team at Carlo's Bakery.

The 10-episode season kicks off with a special 90-minute premiere on Monday, November 26 at 9pm ET/PT. The series' second season, which crowned Marissa Lopez as the winner, was watched by an average of 1.7M viewers.

This season, Buddy and his family welcome special guests to judges the challenges, including Mario Lopez & Courtney Mazza, Lou Ferrigno, Peter Billingsley (*A Christmas Story*), Holly Madison, and Joey Fatone, among others.

"Each season brings out stronger contestants and I think this is the best batch yet. The challenges are tougher, the judges more critical, and the reward as sweet as ever," said Buddy Valastro.

This season's contestants include:

Letty Alvarez – Miami, FL
41 years old; Owner/Operator of LA Sweets

James S. Brown – Lexington, KY (previously from Chicago, IL)
41 years old; Owner of Brown's Bakery

Paul Christopher Conti – Long Beach Island, NJ (originally from Staten Island, NY)
30 years old; currently unemployed

Chad Durkin – Philadelphia, PA (previously from Hackensack, NJ and Toms River, NJ)
28 years old; Owner of CAD Culinary consulting and wedding cakes

Gretel-Ann Fischer – Colchester, VT
35 years old; Owner of Cupp's, a bakery/café in Winooski, Vermont

Peter Gray – East Longmeadow, MA
21 years old; Runs cake decorating business Pete's Sweets

Ashley Lauren Holt – Louisville, KY
24 years old; Pastry Chef at The Louisville Country Club, also runs cake business Sugar Monster Sweets

Jen Kwapinski – San Jose, CA (previously from Columbus, NE)
32 years old; Owner of Jen's Cakes

Chris Luna – Roseville, CA (originally from Pollock Pines, CA) *Chris was the America's Choice selection
29 years old; Currently a Sales Executive, and an amateur baker

Melissa Payne – Chesterfield, VA
33 years old; Owner of Couture Cake Creations, co-owner of Sweets Couture

Jess Reyling – Peoria, IL (originally from Chillicothe, IL)
30 years old; Stay at Home Mom

Emme Tyler – Los Angeles, CA
30 years old; Owner of Skinny Batches

Garrett Wallace – Waverly, TN
36 years old; Cake artist at Fabulous Baker Boy

The series fan site can be found at <http://tlc.howstuffworks.com/tv/next-great-baker>.

NEXT GREAT BAKER is produced for TLC by High Noon Entertainment.

About TLC

TLC is a global brand that celebrates extraordinary people and relatable life moments through innovative nonfiction programming. A top 10 cable network in key female demos, TLC has built successful franchises around the Cake Boss and Say Yes to the Dress brands. In 2011, TLC had 28 series averaging 1.0 million P2+ viewers or more including Sister Wives, My Strange Addiction, Extreme Couponing, Toddlers & Tiaras, 19 Kids and Counting, What Not To Wear and Long Island Medium.

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