

# Iron Chef Michael Symon: Dishing Out Good Advice (Premier Article)

[Positive Impact Magazine](#) | Dec 01, 2010 | [Comments 0](#)

*By: Marci Wise*

He's the culinary king with a string of successful restaurants, coveted awards and television shows. Iron Chef Michael Symon has taken the food scene by storm and managed to cook up a very loyal following of eager patrons. His successful restaurants, Lola and Lolita, have even been credited for reincarnating the dining industry in his hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. By using food that reflects a simplistic, mid-western cooking style with a focus on balancing boldness and subtlety of flavors, this recipe was bound to work.



Michael Symon & Creative Director Jen Hellmann sit down to talk at Farm Aid 2010. Photos by: Jenny Rondinelli

However, Symon's mass appeal doesn't stop there. He captured the attention of the country when he battled in the Food Network's wildly popular reality series *Iron Chef America*, and won. Symon's latest claim to fame came from hosting Farm Aid 25: Growing Hope for America, a cause he truly believes in. The concert – organized by musicians Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp, Neil Young and Dave Matthews – is a celebration of great music, healthy food and the American institution of the family farm. As someone who's made it his business to turn food into a work-of-art for the taste buds, he was more than eager to help out. During the broadcast, Symon revealed how the Mellencamp song *Rain on the Scarecrow*, which is about a family farm foreclosure, affected him in a profound way. "When I was a very young cook, *Scarecrow* came out and it was unbelievable. It's what kind of inspired some of my farm-to-table thoughts about food...it's a song with attitude. Here are the problems and we need to take care of them."

Jen Hellmann, Creative Director and Publisher of *Positive Impact Magazine*, had the unique opportunity to sit down with the *Iron Chef* and find out why this movement means so much to him. "I was incredibly inspired by my grandparents and parents, and how they chose to live and take care of us. They taught me the lessons that I use now." Symon delights in using the freshest of ingredients as the palette for his appetizing artistry. It's an appreciation he gained as a child. "They taught me the importance of food and sitting down to eat at the dining room table with your family." He recommends shopping locally and becoming familiar with what's in season in your area. Buying farm fresh produce eliminates much of the worry about added growth hormones and excessive pesticides. He and his wife have continued the legacy passed down by his ancestors and have involved their own son in the tending of a backyard garden. This family endeavor not only teaches children to become mindful of what they're putting into their bodies, but it also makes them more likely to try new things (because they've planted it themselves), and saves your family money, as well.

As one of the most renowned chefs in the culinary world, Symon knows the importance of a strong agricultural system. We're at a turning point in our country's life and we all need to do our part to keep it that way. "When I became an *Iron Chef*, my life changed, and I was lucky enough to have people in place that cared enough to guide me through it." For today's farmers, struggling not only to thrive but to survive, Farm Aid provides that guidance. When asked how we can help to make a positive change, he suggests starting at home. "Never underestimate the power you have on your children. They're affected by your actions and the choices you make." A few, small lifestyle changes can have a huge impact on your health, your wallet and the local economy and that's a recipe for success.

Visit, [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org) to find the best food that is grown nearest to you. This is a great resource.