

Nashville's Fieri encounter

By Dana Kopp Franklin

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THE FOOD BIZ

Several Nashville restaurants can look forward to some priceless publicity after one of America's most popular celebrity chefs, Guy Fieri, visited them to film an installment of his Food Network show *Diners, Drive-ins and Dives*.

At the Italian bakery and deli Savarino's in Hillsboro Village on Tuesday, Fieri pulled up in his bright red, logo-emblazoned convertible. He proceeded to charm everyone in the family-owned restaurant, including Corrado Savarino Jr. (the young son of owner Corrado Savarino), who wound up sporting Fieri-signature wristbands, an autographed hat and stars in his eyes.

Later Tuesday, Fieri went to Martin's Barbecue on Lower Broadway, and on Wednesday he headed north to Hendersonville to tape a segment with the Oak Ridge Boys at Cafe Rokka.

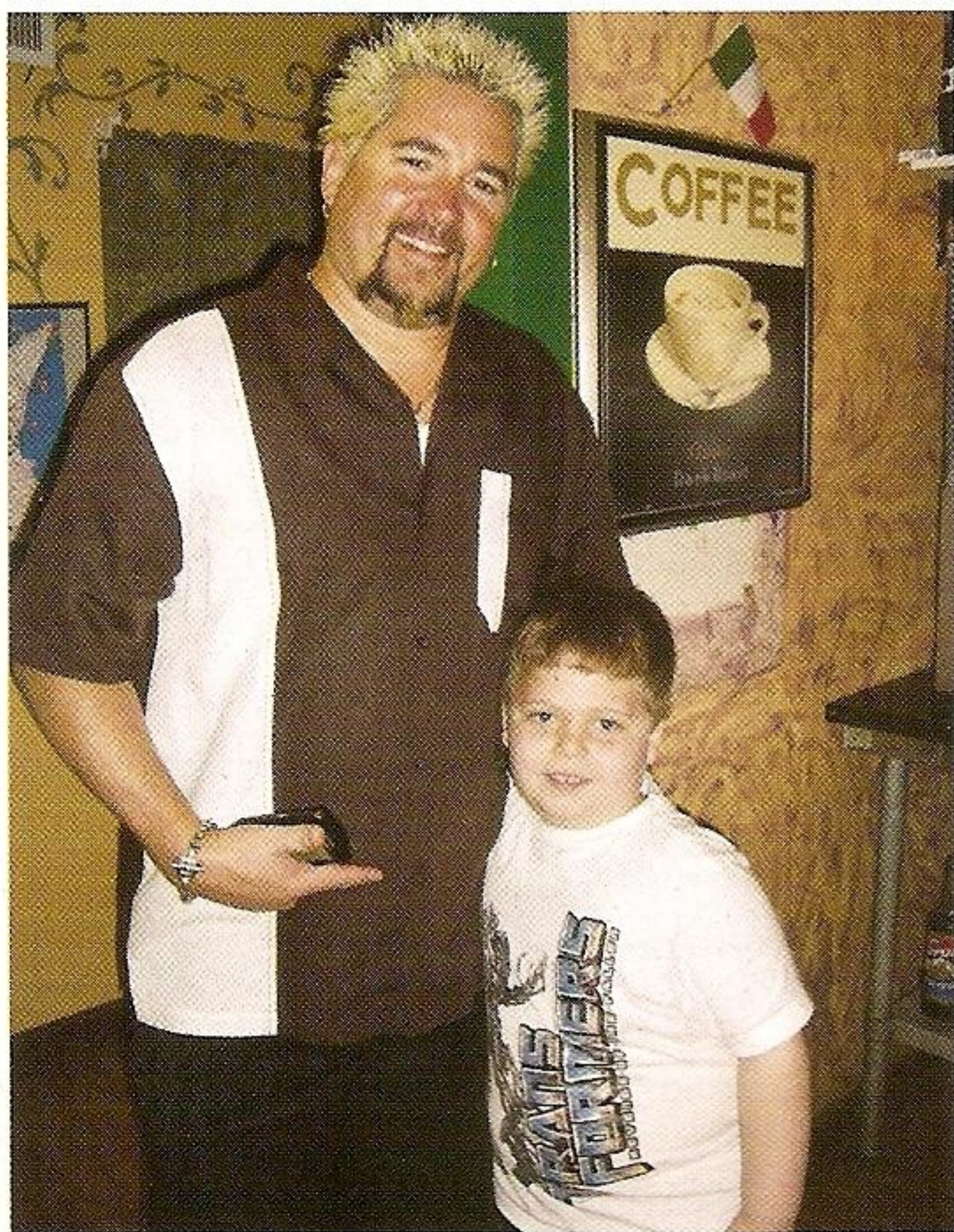
But perhaps the wildest scene was at Athens Family Restaurant, where the TV crew had to be shoehorned into place amid a packed crowd on Easter Sunday. "It was a killer," says chef-owner Adel Elostta. "They were there watching everything — it was a little tight."

"It was a lot of fun," Elostta said of cooking with Fieri. "I felt like I'd been cooking 30 days in 24 hours." The TV chef was totally shocked when Elostta started grinding beef for his Greek meatballs using a prime cut. "He said, 'Why are you using New York strip for meatballs?'" Elostta said. Fieri didn't realize the fiscally prudent chef buys whole sides of beef raised on a farm in Franklin, Ky., freeing him to use whatever cut he wants for whatever purpose.

Though the Food Network wouldn't release an itinerary prior to broadcast, Fieri told *Nashville Scene* editor Jim Ridley, who was on hand for the Savarino's shoot, that another destination was legendary meat-and-three Arnold's.

Fieri is a polarizing figure in the culinary world. His spiky, bleached hair and black goatee, paired with the aforementioned wristbands and volcano-red bowling shirts, are part of a vivid persona, and his "I'm just a regular guy who loves to chow down" attitude rubs some foodies the wrong way. But his popularity is soaring. When he brought his Road Show to TPAC a few months ago, it sold out.

Ridley has become a pro-Guy guy after meeting him. "I enjoyed being around him," he said. "He got everybody's energy up; he's really enthusiastic about food." Fieri also seemed genuinely interested in the Nashville food scene,



Guy Fieri and Corrado Savarino Jr.

asking questions about the history of Hillsboro Village and its concentration of restaurants.

The Food Network declined to say when the Nashville episode will air.

King of the boulevard

Another Nashville restaurant, The Standard, will host a major Hollywood celebrity later this month. James Cameron, who may be the most profit-generating director of all time (*Terminator*, *Titanic*, *Avatar*) and his wife, actress Suzy Amis Cameron, are throwing a party and fashion show here to benefit a nonprofit elementary school that Mrs. Cameron established in Los Angeles to teach children environmental awareness.

The fashion show features designer Jeff Garner, a local boy (from Franklin) whose international fashion line, Prophetik, aims to be both eco-friendly and chic. Models will walk a temporary catwalk along Rosa L. Parks Blvd. downtown, which The Standard (a historic 19th century townhouse) fronts.

Garner has titled the fashion show "Southern Shores"; musical guests include Phil Collen of Def Leppard.

The event starts at 5 p.m. on April 23 and goes late into the evening with various stages of festivity. For \$300, you can have dinner with the Camerons. Other ticket packages start at \$10, and all are available at www.nashville-southernshores.eventbrite.com.

For more on Nashville restaurant scene, visit blogs.nashvillescene.com/bites