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COMEDIAN SCOT NERY, with the top burned off his chef's hat, heated things up at San Francisco's Climate Theater on Friday night during his R-rated interactive "Crash Course," a faux cooking show on "how to seduce a chess team."

The "cooking" show, which changes its theme weekly, began with Nery's energetic introduction on how to set the scene for a romantic date with a chess player over a meal of fettuccine Alfredo and pumpkin pie. Nery, in his zany-sarcastic fashion, laid out the rules for setting the right mood while cooking up inedible food.

Most important: The cook must not distract chess players by using or doing anything involving the colors black or white because chess players must carefully focus upon their chessboard.

"For music, you want to play Green Day, not Barry White," he said.

The audience laughed and followed along with Nery's constant banter almost long enough to forget that the dinner he's making is also a joke.

The making of the Alfredo sauce, a blend of virgin olive oil that smoked "although most virgins don't," flour and coconut milk, could almost be forgiven if not for Nery's pasta boiling rule: "Add as much pasta as enters the pot. The rest is natu-

rally selected to hit the floor."

He then concocted a pumpkin pie composed of rice milk, vanilla, cinnamon, ginger, all-spice, nutmeg, brown (not black) molasses, sugar and pumpkin, partially mixed in a blender with a power drill.

The pie, blender and all, was placed on a shelf behind a curtain that Nery identified as an oven. The audience was left to ponder how Nery planned to produce an actual pie.

In the meantime, Nery performed a juggling act with unopened Coke cans, one of which eventually hit the floor and exploded all over the audience.

"Good thing there's nobody in the front row," he commented.

The show was a comedic success and a culinary disaster that ended with the audience being treated to (thankfully) store-bought pie and ice cream and a Montel Williams-like reflection upon the show's themes, during which Nery made comments like, "A woman's heart lies in her chess."

Nery, 26, got his start at age 7 with a magic kit. After mastering the basics, he was mentored by a professional magician, and by the time he was 11 he was performing for audiences and marketing himself by passing

out his business cards door-to-door.

He ended up in Nashville, Tenn., joining up with local street performers, magicians and jugglers.

There he learned how to bucket juggle, which involves throwing a bucket up in the air and catching it with his head. Of course that led to pancake juggling.

"I flipped pancakes on the street, along to hip-hop music, and people would walk by and think, 'Is he making breakfast? Is he homeless?'"

His current work at the Climate Theater will end in June. He also is performing the "Dirty Lil' Secret Pancake Show" at the New York Hotel in San Francisco.

"Actually, being serious, people try not to look crazy, and they fight their natural urges. I'm just going to try to break people's expectations and shock people in a way that brings out appeal in my performance," he said. "I'm not a performer that's like, 'Hey, I'm the greatest.' I'm just here to converse with the audience and make something fun that people feel like they can be a part of."

Written by: Joalien Johnson
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