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Women on the Chopping Block? Gender Dynamics on Popular Kids Cooking Competition Shows and in the Culinary Profession.

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This study examines gendered aspects of the shows Chopped Junior and Kids Baking Championship. It assesses the extent to which young female chefs are underrepresented as contestants and winners on cooking competition shows as well as how these findings may impact the gender makeup of the culinary profession. In each episode of Chopped Junior, four chefs between the ages of eight and thirteen compete in a three-round contest. At the end of each round, one contestant is eliminated, and at the end of the episode, one winner is declared. In each season of Kids Baking Championship, around eight bakers between the ages of eight and thirteen compete in a baking competition. At the end of each episode, one contestant is eliminated, and in the last episode of the season, one winner is declared. Through a systematic review of all 203 available Chopped Junior and Kids Baking Championship episodes, the gender of the contestants were noted. A descriptive and correlative analysis was performed on the data collected using R programming. Out of the 384 contestants in Chopped Junior, 213 (55.5%) were female. Overall, the proportion of young female chefs that won the competition was 60%. Of the 107 contestants in Kids Baking Championship, 58 (54.2%) were female, and the proportion of young female chefs that won the competition was 62%. These findings indicate that girls are not underrepresented as contestants and are not less likely to win on Chopped Junior and Kids Baking Championship, as their success rate is slightly higher than their representation as contestants. However, while young girls have a greater presence in cooking competition shows, they don't appear to be in positions of leadership and power in the culinary profession as they grow older. Ensuring that women and men have equal access to opportunities as they grow older may help narrow the disparities that women face in the culinary profession. The distinct difference between female representation on Chopped Junior, Kids Baking Championship, and the culinary profession link to larger gender inequalities that women face as they enter the workforce, even in a space that has been traditionally gendered in the domestic sphere.

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