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Marc Murphy Cooks Italian

Chef **Marc Murphy** is known for his bistro [Landmarc](#) in TriBeCa, its [sibling](#) at the Time Warner Center and Greenwich Village seafooder [Ditch Plains](#), but he's now looking to try his hand at a strictly Italian menu. On May 10, Murphy will host [Zagat Presents](#) "Mangia Bene," a four-course, family-style dinner at Astor Center. And, according to Murphy, it may not be the last you'll see of his passion for Italian cuisine.



Marc Murphy

Zagat Buzz: How would you describe your attitude towards food, and how have your travels played into your cooking style?

Marc Murphy: My mother and grandmother were very good cooks. So I was lucky enough as a youngster to have grown up eating very well, and that influences a lot of my culinary background. I've spent eight or nine years in Italy and eight or nine years in France. ...The thing about Landmarc is that it's a French bistro – and I did bring Italian food to the menu, I do a pasta a day – but my only problem with having a French bistro with Italian influences is I can't really run too much Italian food because it muddies up the concept. People don't really know what they're coming to get. So that's why I really want to do a dinner with mostly Italian food – because I want to open an Italian restaurant. So maybe this is the beginning of it. Why not?

ZB: Could you describe your overall inspiration for the Zagat Presents menu?

MM: I'm a very inclusive person. We have a house on Long Island and we have people over for dinner all the time. I like to have parties. I like everybody to sit around a table and have fun and enjoy dinner. I'm just trying to replicate that feeling here with an Italian, family-style meal. If you want more food, there's more of it. It's almost like you're coming to my house for dinner, in a sense.

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ZB: You will also be cooking some of your favorite Italian dishes.

MM: Yes. One of the pastas we're doing is one of my absolute favorites. But it's always so difficult to decide – I have a million things I love.

ZB: [Landmarc in the Park](#) and [Surfer Sundays at Ditch Plains](#) both officially launched this past weekend. How did you come up with these playful, warm-weather ideas?

MM: Time Warner Center is so close to the park, and we just want to be able to expand more benefits to the neighborhood – almost expand our dining room, in a sense. People can come and pick up a box with sandwiches or whatnot, and it comes with a throwaway picnic blanket and a Frisbee. And they can go sit in the park – they don't have to stay at the restaurant. The Sunday night thing [at Ditch Plains] sort of just came up. My wife and I have two kids, and we were thinking of something fun to do on Sunday night. We usually go to dinner early and try to get the kids to bed early, so we can get to bed early on Sunday nights. And so we were like, "Well, let's just do a lobster thing at Ditch Plains." We do a one-and-a-half pound lobster, boil them, crack the tail and the claws, comes with an ear of corn and Andouille sausage with a potato, and it's a nice little meal for \$30. It's a lot of fun. Not to mention we also do \$4 drafts, which is a nice thing to do on a Sunday night.

ZB: Landmarc is also a participating restaurant at the upcoming Taste of TriBeCa and Taste of the UWS. Why do you like participating in the Tastes?

MM: We've been doing [the Taste] every year since we've been open. We're a very neighborhood-centered type of restaurant. When the weather gets better, it's nice to get out and see all the neighbors and say hi to the regular people who are in the restaurant all the time. It's a nice way to talk to people.

ZB: You're a judge on the Food Network show Chopped. What do you like most about being a judge?

MM: It's really just seeing the quickness, and the interesting things that people come up with. It's like, "What in the world are they going to make in 20 minutes or a half hour with this?" It's really, really tough. Some people can really do it – they can pull out some great flavors. The most nerve-wracking part for us watching is when it's coming down to the wire and there's 30 seconds left – "Get your food on the plate!" It's fun. And at the end of the day, the person who wins makes \$10,000. Not a bad day's work.

ZB: Do you ever think about what you would cook for challenges?

MM: Oh, yeah. We're all like, "Oh, they should do this, they should do that," under our breaths so they don't hear us.

ZB: Are there any new or upcoming projects that you would want to talk about?

MM: I have a couple of things that I'm working on, but we don't have any leases signed or anything like that yet, so I really don't want to jinx it.

ZB: Maybe something Italian?

MM: I don't know. We're working on it. We're working on a couple of things. I'm not really sure what's going to happen. We're always looking for more work – we're crazy like that.

The four-course, family-style "Mangia Bene" dinner, including hors d'oeuvres, wine, beer and specialty cocktails, costs \$150; 7 PM reception, 8 PM dinner; to reserve email zagat@landmarc-restaurant.com, or call 212-625-8271 and mention "Zagat Presents."