

Reality TV Hotties Confess: Jordis, Toccara, Jessica Cabo

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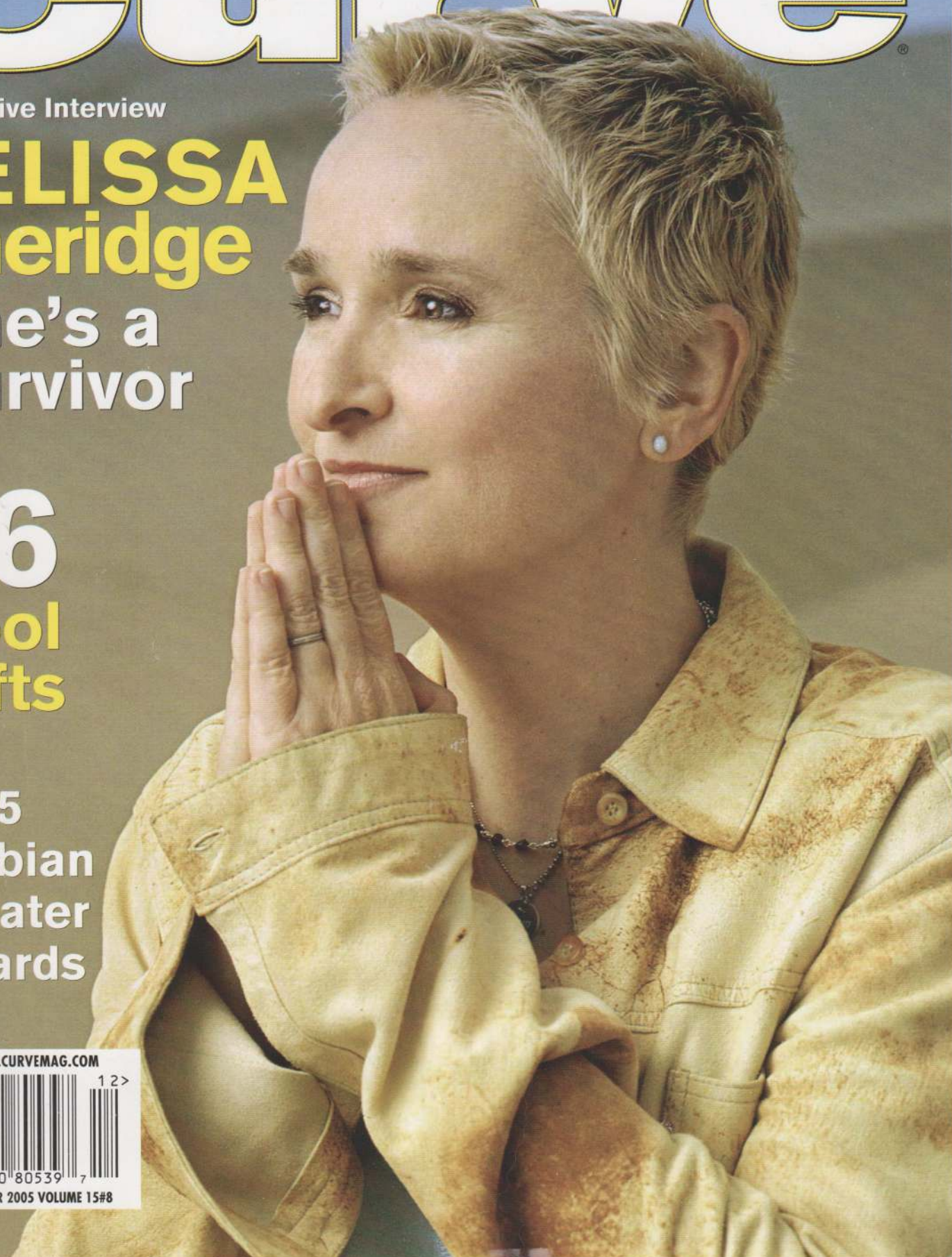
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DECEMBER 2005 VOLUME 15#8



DISHING IT OUT

HELL'S KITCHEN'S JESSICA CABO BY CANDACE MOORE

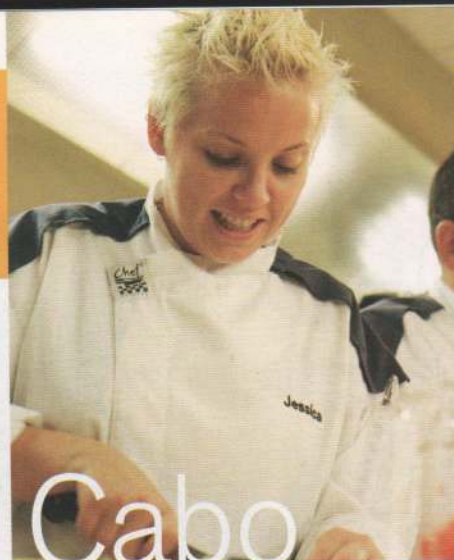
"When I first went in there, because of my hair, he thought: 'punk ass,'" contestant Jessica Cabo says of master chef Gordon Ramsay, who judged Fox's grueling cooking reality show, *Hell's Kitchen*. "It took him a minute to realize that I'm serious."

At first glance, Cabo reads as more of a stylish, affable punk than a hard-nosed restaurateur, willing to grill, knead, soufflé and garnish her way to the top. If the popular prime-time show's viewers stayed glued past the show's pilot, however, they soon realized that Cabo was a self-assured, energized contender, determined to fight skillet to skillet for the chance to run her own gourmet eatery. Of the 12 competitors on *Hell's Kitchen*, she took third place, despite the fact that she had never attended a culinary institute. A professional headhunter who hosts elegant dinners for friends as a

weekend hobby, Cabo was dubbed "feisty" by the perfectionist head chef, whose bite (palate-wise) was supremely kinder to her than his bark. Unlike those booted off the show before her, she was respectfully invited to "leave through the front door" in the precursor to *Hell's Kitchen*'s season finale.

More surprising was the Fox network's handling of Cabo's lesbianism. Her sexual orientation did not come up in the bulk of the show — it was neither capitalized on, nor kept hush-hush. However, during the cook-off challenge between the final three, the partners and family members of the battling chefs were brought on as taste testers, and Cabo's stunning girlfriend, Courtney, was among them.

Not only was Courtney introduced to viewers as Cabo's girlfriend, but Jessica immediately landed a wet one on her sweetie



— a long open-mouthed kiss — and the camera didn't pan away.

Says Cabo of what may have been reality TV's first prime-time lesbian kiss: "With *Big Brother* or [shows] like that, they say, 'There's a gay contestant!' Fox never said that. So the kiss came as a surprise — it's not like people were waiting for it. It was actually maybe more tastefully done because it is what it is. It was not exploited, but [the producers] did put it on." ■

BREAKING RULES

TOCCARA FROM AMERICA'S NEXT TOP MODEL BY CATHERINE PLATO

When the bold and sassy Toccara auditioned for *America's Next Top Model*, she changed the face of American beauty. Standing 5-foot-9 and weighing in at 180 pounds of pure hotness, Toccara is anything but your typical model. A recent castmate on VH-1's *Celebrity Fit Club 2*, Toccara has since signed with Wilhelmina and began promoting Ashley Stewart (a line of plus-sized urban clothing).

Lesbians love you. How's that feel?

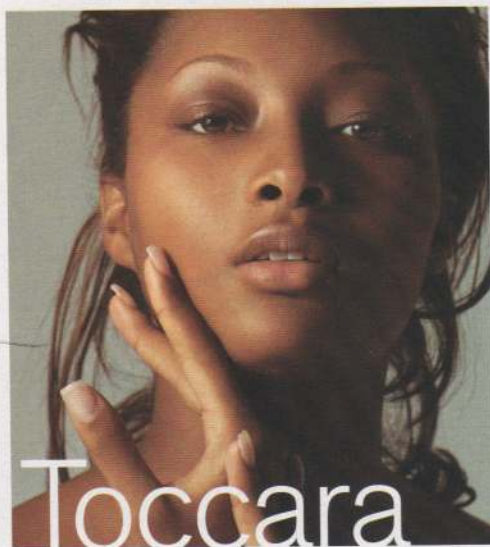
I feel flattered! It's so funny, because all my friends, they tell me lesbian women are hitting on them all the time, and I'm like, "There don't be no gay girls be hitting on me! I feel left out!" So I feel good now. Thank you!

What do you think it is that makes them identify with you?

Because I'm real and just me, you know? I'm just like them, so I guess they can just relate. I'm not trying to be something that I'm not. I'm just who I am.

Who are your own role models?

I look up to my sister. She used to model. She lives in New York, and



because of her I think I am where I am. She gave me a place to stay and steered me in the right direction. I was blessed to have someone in my life ... I could look up to. I see Queen Latifah, I see Monique on TV — and these women are doing great things — but I don't know them. They don't mentor me. I can take as much as I can from what the media gives me, but my sister is the best thing that I could have.

You were a student. Is that something that you plan on pursuing again?

Yes, yes, yes. Definitely. And a lot of people are like, "Toccara, you're going to be so huge, you don't even need to go back to school." And I probably don't need to go back to school. But I want to because no one in my

family — like my mother, my father, my grandmother, my grandfather — ever completed college. It's just something I want to do for myself. And I always wanted to be a pharmaceutical representative. So when I get gray hair, and I'm 50 or 60, I want to wear a business suit and I want to go into my office and sit behind my desk and take a call on line one or tell people I'm out for lunch. It's my little fantasy. ■