



**BY JILLIAN RISBERG**  
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In a haunting prophecy, Gordon Ramsay chastises Joe Cerniglia, a popular Fair Lawn chef and restaurateur who was featured on Fox's 'Kitchen Nightmares' in 2007 that his business, Campania, is "about to swim down the f-ing Hudson."

The death of Cerniglia, 39, has officially been ruled a suicide by the New York Medical Examiner's Office after his body was found floating in the river on Sept. 24.

He allegedly leaped from the George Washington Bridge and drowned.

The blunt-impact injuries found on his head, torso and appendages were consistent with an elevated fall.

A disturbing trend is emerging, as Cerniglia is not the first, but second Ramsay contestant to take their own life after appearing on one of his reality bruisers. The casualty of 'Hell's Kitchen,' 41-year-old Dallas chef Rachel Brown, shot herself in 2007.

But Kevin Wynn of Verona, the chef's brother-in-law, told northjersey.com that Cerniglia took

Ramsay's criticisms in stride and his suggestions to heart.

In an episode of 'Nightmares,' Cerniglia spoke candidly of his crushing money woes.

"I'm financially in trouble," he said. "The debt of the restaurant alone is overwhelming. My personal debt — wife, kids, mortgage — that's a lot of debt." **RELATED:**

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At the time, he said he owed his vendors \$80,000 in cold, hard cash and his family was concerned the pressure would get to him.

"I worry about Joe," his mother Pat said on the show. "I worry about his stress levels."

Since his television debut three years ago, Cerniglia's star was on the rise. He claimed the top honor in Chef Central's Ultimate Chef Bergen County and in 2010 was hailed as one of the Garden State's finest five chefs by Inside Jersey magazine.

The chef's relatives intend to continue running his restaurant and implementing such improvements as new kitchen equipment and delivery service that Cerniglia set up before his death.

He leaves behind wife Melissa and sons, Evan, 13; Michael, 11, and Nicholas, 9. The family's Facebook page expresses gratitude to all the friends who have offered condolences. Anyone who would like to extend a monetary donation (in lieu of flowers), it is much appreciated.... address to Melissa Cerniglia, 11 Poplar Ave, Pompton Plains, NJ 07444.

Ron Squillace, owner of Castalia Trattoria in Woodland Park, told northjersey.com that he and Cerniglia met two years ago and formed

a tight bond. He was "shocked" to learn of his passing from a mutual friend.

"Joe was a wonderful, talented young chef whose horizon was brighter than anyone else I know," he said, with deep sadness in his voice.