

Report and Scope – 2026 Jeunes Chefs Rotisseurs Competition

Held at le Cordon Bleu, Istanbul, Turkey

April 18, 2026

A Global Stage for the Next Generation: 49th Jeunes Chefs Rôtisseurs Competition in Istanbul

The 49th Annual Concours International des Jeunes Chefs Rôtisseurs brought energy, precision, and no small amount of adrenaline to the kitchens of Le Cordon Bleu in Istanbul this April. The competition once again proved why it remains one of the most respected platforms for emerging culinary talent anywhere in the world.

Representing 22 countries—Australia, Belgium, Bermuda, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Kenya, Macau, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, UAE, UK, and USA—these 22 competitors arrived ready to test their skills under pressure, creativity, and the unforgiving constraints of the famed “black box.”

The Black Box Challenge

At the heart of the competition is the mystery and discipline of the black box. This year’s mandatory items set a serious technical tone from the outset. Competitors knew one element in advance—a rack of lamb (8-bone) and boneless lamb shoulder—announced a month ahead to allow for preparation and refinement.

But the rest of the basket revealed itself only on arrival: eggplant, artichoke, macadamia nuts, and bluefish (lüfer). A combination that demanded versatility, balance, and a willingness to take risks. With the rule requiring at least 25% usage of each mandatory ingredient, there was no room to sidestep a challenge—every component had to be respected, understood, and elevated on the plate.

With just 30 minutes to conceptualize a three-course menu and 3.5 hours to execute it, the pressure was relentless. Timing, hygiene, and organization were judged just as rigorously as flavor and presentation—because in the real world, excellence demands all three.

A Jury That Knows the Journey

This year's international jury was not only distinguished but uniquely connected to the competition itself. Among them were three former competitors who have come full circle:

- **Sydney Hamelin (Canada), Silver medal winner in Budapest 2024, served as Assistant Kitchen Supervisor**
- **Sindre Hjelmseth (Norway), Gold Medal winner of the 2020 competition, joined as Tasting Judge**
- **Leah Patitucci (Canada), a past competitor in Mexico 2023, also served on the Tasting Jury**

Their presence added a meaningful layer to the evaluation process—judges who truly understand the intensity of the experience.

The Winners

After an extraordinary day of competition, the results reflected both technical mastery and creative excellence:

First Place – Arthur Bolli Memorial Trophy: Erik Hansen (Canada)

Second Place – Eugénie Brazier Award: Joel Manninen (Finland)

Third Place – Jean Valby Trophy: Marcell Kocsis (Hungary)

In addition, Erik Hansen also received the Wüsthof Kitchen Quality Award, recognizing the highest score in foundational kitchen skills—a testament to precision, discipline, and craftsmanship behind the scenes.

A Community Effort

Events of this scale rely on extraordinary collaboration. Special recognition goes to the Bailliage of Turkey, led by Bailli Délégué Yves Léon, whose leadership and commitment ensured a memorable competition.

Equal appreciation goes to Defne Tüysüzoğlu, Director of Operations, le Cordon Bleu Istanbul, Chef Erich Ruppen, Technical Director, and their exceptional team. They delivered world-class facilities and flawless operational support throughout the event.

Sponsors: The Backbone of Excellence

The competition continues to thrive thanks to the generosity and vision of its sponsors. Longstanding support from Le Cordon Bleu—under the leadership of André Cointreau—remains central, including the prestigious scholarship awarded to the winner.

Wüsthof continues its enduring partnership, providing professional knives to competitors and recognizing excellence in kitchen craftsmanship. Harald Wusthof has been forefront in this sponsorship since 2006.

This year also saw the continued and valued support of Indoguna, OSCAR (premium stocks and sauces), and SAMAC, whose products featured prominently in the competition—including the macadamia nuts in the black box.

More Than a Competition

What sets the Jeunes Chefs Rôtisseurs apart is not just the level of talent, but the spirit of the event. These chefs aren't only competing—they're building lifelong connections, learning from one another, and stepping into a global culinary community that will shape their futures.

Long after the final plates were served, what remains is the sense of momentum: a new generation of chefs pushing boundaries, respecting tradition, and redefining what's possible—one dish at a time.

Looking Ahead

The next edition of this remarkable competition will mark a major milestone—the 50th anniversary of the Concours International des Jeunes Chefs Rôtisseurs—scheduled for the fall of 2027.

Planning is already underway, and David Tetrault, Committee Chair and the JCR Committee are developing a special commemorative digital project to celebrate five decades of excellence. All former competitors are warmly invited to participate and share their journey.

To be involved, please contact Committee Member Lois Gilbert at Lois.gilbert@me.com.

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