



International Jeunes Chefs Rôtisseurs Competition Report

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REPORT BY JANNECE TAPSALL,
Member, Jeunes Chefs Rôtisseurs Committee

Having just returned from the International Jeunes Chefs Rotisseurs Competition held this year in Berlin, I have to admit to being continually amazed by the amount of work and dedication the organization of such a respected international Chefs competition takes. This is not just a simple competition. It involves competitors from many countries, some with little or no English. It also involves strict assessment of many aspects of the young chefs performance both in the kitchen and in the resultant 3 course menu prepared for 4 people and judged by professional Tasting Judges.

The international competitors who do not speak English are assisted at the Black Box Menu preparation stage only by their accompanying translator, but are thereafter left to work their magic alone in the kitchen. I was most impressed by the young competitor from Japan, Michinobu Uchida, who had absolutely no English and had to rely on his translator, Kumi Tajima, for all communication. One can only imagine the extreme difficulties this incurred in a stressful international competition environment. To all of us, this in itself justified admiration and recognition. Other countries with competitors with limited English were, Colombia, France, Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan, Finland, Russia and Italy.

The competitors were treated to sightseeing tours, restaurant visits, professional visits to culinary seminars at the university, and finally briefings at the Industrie und Handelskammer Institute. Here they were allowed a preliminary inspection of the competition kitchen, appliances and set up. They were then randomly assigned to a morning or afternoon group and given their chef's jackets, both kitchen and formal, chefs' hats and documentation.

The following morning the first group of 12 competitors arrived 6am for the commencement of the competition. The first group of 4 was taken to a private room where the contents of the black box were displayed for them to prepare their menu composition. Each competitor is given 30 minutes to plan, write and present their menu. During this 30minute menu preparation period, Chef Takashi Murakami, Kitchen Supervisor (Conseiller Culinaire Canada) checked each competitor's kitchen toolbox to ensure that all competitors only had access to the same kitchen tools and appliances.

This year's black box included, mandatory items of
Lamb loin 10 bones, 1600g
Tuna 600g
Shrimps fresh 12 each
Raspberries 150g
Blueberries 150g
Calamondin/Kalamansi fruit 4 each

Most competitors were decidedly concerned with the Calamondin/Kalamansi fruit mentioned on the black box sheet until they saw the fruit and realized they were commonly known as Cumquats.

Chaîne des Rôtisseurs – Association Mondiale de la Gastronomie

The first 4 competitors were taken to the kitchen at 6.30am. The same process was then used for group 2 and 3 with the final group of the last 4 competitors from the first group, in the kitchen by 8am.

Copies of the competitor's hand written menus were then processed and a copy was delivered to each chef in the kitchen to commence their cooking and preparation.

The competitors are given 3.5 hours to complete and present their dishes to the tasting judges for assessment, all the while their behavior and competence in the kitchen is assessed by a panel of 3 professional chefs, who score each competitor on a set list of requisites.

The buzz in the kitchen was electric. The competition kitchen was packed with chefs, supervisors, judges, and volunteer aides. This stainless steel enclave was a hive of activity with high expectation and anticipation. All onlookers hovered and awaited their call to duty, while eagerly watching the competitors from a position outside the kitchen confines.

Each competitor was assigned their own work area and proceeded to prepare and cook their decided menu for 4 guests with assessment by the professional tasting Judges. Kitchen hands awaited the completion of each dish for delivery to the tasting judges and the kitchen was frantic with people and activity. Menu preparation, timing and kitchen planning was essential for successful results, particularly in regard to the dessert timing, such as freezing etc. Time management was critical in executing the designed menu. Thinking ahead, with thought to presentation and optimum temperature was crucial for each dish to be presented to the tasting judges at the peak of their best in temperature and texture.

The Tasting Judges appraised the presented food based on taste combinations, presentation, temperature and visual creativity, while the Kitchen Judges assessed the competitors on their kitchen skills, cleanliness of work area, utilization of produce and equipment, knife skills and preparation creativity.

After a frantic morning session was completed the same process was again carried out for the final 10 remaining competitors. A long and tiring day for the competitors, judges, supervisors, officials and members of the International Jeunes Chefs Committee, led by the Committee Chairman David Tetrault. Other members include Jannece Tapsall Bailli Delegue Australia and Klaus Tritschler, Bailli Delegue Germany.

After the competition was completed David Tetrault and Jannece Tapsall recorded and collated the score sheets for each competitor from both the Kitchen Judges and the Tasting Judges individual score sheets. The winner, Christina Merz from Germany was announced at the Gala Dinner Presentation later that night. Second was Jonathon Moncuit from France and third was Wynand Reiman from South Africa.