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NEWS

Cher Harris, of The Hotel Hershey, Wins Ladies' World Pastry Championship

Harris beats out women from around in this world in the international competition.

By [Valerie King](#)

January 29, 2014 No Comments

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The Hotel Hershey now has royalty working in the kitchen — or at least pastry royalty.

Cher Harris, CPEC — executive pastry chef at **The Hotel Hershey** since 2009 — has been crowned “The Pastry Queen,” one of the most prestigious awards for women within the pastry industry.

“I don’t know that it’s completely set in yet,” Harris says. “It’s really an honor not only to represent the country, my community and my job site. It’s kind of surreal to kind of step back and realize how big it was.”

Harris represented the U.S. as one of 11 contestants, each representing a different country at the Ladies’ World Pastry Championship in Rimini, Italy, Jan. 18-20.

During the three-day competition, she was given different “challenges.”

On the first day, she was paired with an Italian barista and instructed to prepare 10 tiramisus that complimented the barista’s espresso. The second day, Harris had to create 10 verrine portions (a dessert presented in a glass, usually built in layers) that represented the U.S. On both of these days, she had just one hour to complete the challenges.

Then, the third day lasted nine hours. Harris had to prepare three entremets (a multi-layered mousse-based cake), 16 plated desserts and a sugar showpiece. All three elements had to fit the competition’s theme: “The Evolution of Cinema.”

“The most challenging was the last day. It was a nine-hour competition so it really requires a lot of stamina,” Harris says.

Contestants were scored by a jury of 15 people: the winner from the 2012 competition, two representatives from an Italian pastry society, a French “Master of Pastry” and each country’s team manager. Fifty percent of the score was based on flavor. The other 50 percent included scores on presentation, theme and organization.

Harris, who says she didn’t have anything go horribly wrong during the contest, believes two things set her apart from the other countries.

“I think we had really good flavors and a lot of the points were based upon that. We did a lot of comparing flavors and textures before we even started practicing,” she explains. “Second was just remaining consistent throughout. I was within running against a couple other countries throughout and I think it was just the consistency.”

Susan Notter, pastry director at The Pennsylvania School of Culinary Arts, is Harris’ mentor and invited her to represent the U.S. in The Pastry Queen competition. She was also Harris’ manager during the competition.

Notter and pastry chefs from New York City and France worked with and trained Harris in terms of recipe selection and flavor composition. Formal practices began in September 2013 and grew more intense in the two months prior to the competition, up to two times per week.

“I wouldn’t say that I was more than prepared but I did feel comfortable throughout. and I think that came from the fact that we did practice,” Harris says.

The Ladies’ World Pastry Championship is held every two years and only female pastry chefs are allowed to enter. It offers them a significant opportunity to test their skills and find new stimuli for a successful, rewarding career.

The competition was held in conjunction with the 35th **Salone Internazionale Gelateria, Pasticceria E Panificazione Artigianali** (SIGEP, International Exhibition for the Artisan Production of Gelato, Pastry, Confectionery and Bakery). The other countries represented were Belarus, Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, France, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Russia and Switzerland.

Harris received a monetary prize for winning the Championship.

Also, as a part of winning the competition, she has been invited back in 2016 to crown the next “Pastry Queen”. She will serve as the president of the jury and serve as a part of the judging team.

“That’ll be, I think, another neat experience,” she says. “I’m going to try to learn some Italian before I



Cher Harris

Hilliard's Intro



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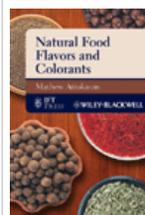
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go because there's a lot of language barriers throughout... I'm going to work on that and really just come to see the other side of it, which I think will be a lot of fun."

On Saturday, Feb. 22 she'll do a demo at the Travel and Adventure Show in Washington, DC. In early March, she'll be in New York City to participate in the U.S. Pastry Competition.

Excited for the coming events, Harris says it would be nice to have been able to fit in the same amount of preparation as she did for the Ladies' Championship.

"I was thinking in Italy that maybe I wasn't ready for the next one, but you know, with coming back I kind of have to make myself ready now," she explains. "There's a little bit of an expectation that I'm going to be there and going to do another one, but I kind of thrive on that kind of stress also."

As executive pastry chef at The Hotel Hershey, she oversees a staff of up to 18 employees that create everything sweets for all dining outlets at the Hotel. She thrives on the attention to detail and exactness needed for pastry. Her true passions are in specialty wedding cakes and plated dessert composition.

"I'd say the most important thing in Hershey is the people that I work with here. It's like having a whole separate family here," she says. "The hotel's very supportive as far as wanting to do things like this."

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Editorial Intern

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