



Jean Jacques Granet, of the MGM Grand in Las Vegas and good friend of Pastry Profiles (FOPP) recently competed in the Patis France Pastry Chef of the Year competition. Competing against a distinguished group of Pastry Chefs from across the United States, he was able to receive an Honorable Mention or fourth Place award. My thinking about this type of high quality competitions is that if they call your name during the awards ceremony you've done an outstanding job. I was able to talk with Chef about his preparation for the competition as well as his approach to competing on this level. He was very candid with his answers and was also nice enough to share a couple of recipes. What I'm learning more and more about Jean Jacques is that his attitude is only surpassed by his talents. Our congratulations go out to him.

Q. Could you please tell us a little bit about your preparation for the Pastry Chef of the Year competition? When did you start to practice?

A. Working in a large hotel like MGM Grand has been very helpful for my preparation, I have received a lot of support from my colleagues and upper management, I had started 6 months ago first to work on my cakes and bonbons as for me taste is very important, then I have done 3 practices on my show piece asking feedback and comments to my mentor and friends

Q. How much focus was on the showpiece and how much on degustation?

A. 100 % focus on each but I have spend more time working on my showpiece as I have been faster on getting my cake and bonbons set up to the level I wanted.

Q. The showpiece for this competition must include sugar and chocolate. Can you discuss some of the challenges in design a piece that includes those 2 mediums? How did you attach chocolate to sugar and vice versa?

A. Because of the theme we have this year and many possibilities that includes it; it was easy for me to design this show piece, I decided to have all the bottom part of my

showpiece made of chocolate and the top part made of sugar because lighter on weight. To assemble both element I used tempered chocolate to glue them, the trick was to have two same size disc flat parts on both piece. The connection was masked by the sugar white snow balls around.

Q. The theme for the competition was The Winter Olympics. How did you try to incorporate that theme into your elements?

A. For the sugar part on top I decide to have the casting sugar representing a skating ice track ended by the Olympic flame, on the middle of the ice track I incorporated the 5 colors Olympics rings molding them using plastic pipes. For the bottom part I



molded and carved a large piece of chocolate to represent the “O” of Olympic encompassing my cake and an iced chocolate flower on the middle. The very bottom part of the showpiece represents a windy iced snow supporting some snow balls covered by my chocolate bonbons.

Q. One of the most difficult parts of competing is traveling to the site. Can you tell us how you got your pieces to the competition and any problems you had to overcome?

A. For traveling to the site I have sent a pallet of equipment by road with all my chocolate parts carefully wrapped with bubble plastic sheets. All the sugar work and cakes have been made in New York and I traveled with my pastillage as a carry-on 3 days before the competition; I got the chance to be hosted by a friend who provided us enough space in his pastry shop. My biggest concern was how to travel inside New York City with the snow storm we have to face!!! I decided to rent a van and go very slowly from my friend hotel to the food show site... that day I made so many cab driver mad at me for driving 5 miles an hour... but we made it.

Q. Being a little bit older myself I was wondering if age had any impact negative or positive on competing against some very young competitors? Is age and experience a benefit or did it have any effect on you during the grueling competition process?

A. I feel very young in my head and body so I did not see any negative impact on competing against young competitors, I think that age could be beneficial some times for the experience we have but overall I am glad that we have young competitors this mean that our beautiful job still attractive.

Q. How long did you get to assemble your showpiece at the venue and was that experience nerve-racking?

A. It took me 2.5 hours to assemble my showpiece without rushing, I believe that the practices I did and the help from my assistant Jose Macias have make me feel comfortable at the venue.

Q. Looking back on your preparation if you could change any part of what you did what might that be.

A. We all learn by our mistakes and this competition was a great learning experience for that. After talking with all judges I knew where my weaknesses were. I will focus more on my bonbons, I will put more sugar techniques (a sugar flower could have change a lot) a thinner pastillage