

Title:

Barista Competitions

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1079

Summary:

Barista competitions are held each year in over 30 countries and the winners get a chance to compete for the ultimate title: winner of the World Barista Championship.

Keywords:

barista, barista training, espresso machine

Article Body:

A barista is a person who prepares coffee drinks in a coffee house as his or her profession and especially strives to create the <b>perfect espresso</b>. The barista possesses extensive knowledge on different kinds of beans and roasts and has the technical skills required to master the espresso machine.

Baristas consider the extraction of coffee as art and they actually perform in front of their customers each time they prepare an espresso, a cappuccino, a caffe latte or a caffe mocha. However, if they wish for larger audience and consider themselves as really talented they can consider competing in <b>barista competitions</b>. These events take place every year and they are held at local and national levels. The ultimate title to win is the World Barista Champion.

The World Barista Championship was first held in 2000 in Monte Carlo and it became quickly a public event where the best baristas from different countries battled for espresso making supremacy. The World Barista Championship takes place every year in a different country and the competitors are the winners of the national barista competitions.

In the United States the Specialty Coffee Association of America (SCAA) hosts several local barista competitions. There are ten regions, and each state has been assigned to a region. Local competitions are sponsored by businesses, and the winner of each of the local events has the chance to try to impress the jury at the US Barista Championship. There are many barista competitions in Europe and the United Kingdom. Canada, Australia and Central America also have barista competitions at the local, regional and national levels.

In a barista competition the judges have to assess both the contenders and the

coffee drinks they make. The criteria based on which they score each barista involve the quality and taste of the beverage, personal presentation, technique and also the presentation of the coffee drink.

The baristas race against the clock as they are only allowed to perform for 15 minutes. They also have 15 minutes before the actual presentation to prepare with every detail for the show - ingredients like syrups, chocolate sprinkles or anything that you can think of except alcohol, cups, trays, blenders, mixers and portable burners. Contenders even roast their own coffee and bring it with them at the competition. After serving their drinks, baristas have 15 minutes to clean their station before they make room for another contestant. The espresso machines used in the competition are key to the taste of the coffee. The machines must be left absolutely clean and free from any impurities.

During the 15 minute performance interval baristas have to prove their skills by preparing **<b>4 espressos, 4 cappuccinos and 4 signature drinks</b>**. Four sensory judges that have to decide on the quality of the drinks sample each one of the beverages. While preparing the beverages, the baristas have to present their work, give details about the ingredients they used to the audience and also treat the judges as customers in a coffee shop. One can only imagine the stress.

After the espressos and cappuccinos, which are finished with latte art - complicate designs drawn atop the cup with foamed milk by using the pitcher, the time comes for the **<b>signature drink</b>**. It is the competitor's original creation and this is where baristas reveal their creativity and skills combining roasts, syrups, steaming and frothing milk and using all sorts of ingredients and flavours that turn their beverages into savory works of art. The baristas can spend even months to invent this perfect drink that can bring them the victory in a competition.

Here are some examples of drinks that barista champions have invented:

**<ul><li>**Troels Poulsen, the 2005 World Barista Championship winner, created a drink called ESB, as in "enhanced sensory balance" by combining melted pepper-gel, espresso and lavender syrup.**</li><li>**Phuong Tran, the 2005 USA Barista Champion, was inspired by her childhood in creating the Crimson Sage, a drink made of sugar cane juice, white pepper powder and steamed milk infused with sage leaves. She said that as a child she loved drinking sugar cane juice with ice and she always dreamed of using it in a drink.**</li><li>**Sammy Piccolo, the 2004 Canadian Barista Championship winner, created "Insieme" by using raw sugar, egg yolks, curry, bittersweet chocolate and milk.**</li><li>**Bronwen Serna, USA Barista Champion of 2004, entitled her signature drink "Sweetness" because the main "secret" ingredient was honey. She also used dark chocolate powder and served it

with a dark chocolate square.</li></ul>

Baristas train hard for these competitions, especially if they have the chance to participate in the World Barista Championship. They try to bring to perfection their technique and put together their program as during the competition everything has to work smoothly, no glitches are allowed. They can actually be compared to athletes rehearsing for the Olympic games as some of them even have coaches that sometimes play the role of judges in preparation for the competition.

### <b>Barista training</b>

Well, perhaps after reading about the competition requirements it might be wise to brush up a bit on your skills. There are several ways to either get basic skills training as a barista or enhance your existing skills:

<ul><li><b>Books and manuals</b>. There are many books or manuals available that take you step by step through the processes of making an espresso, a cappuccino and other specialty coffee drink. The drawback is that you only have still pictures to look at which may make it difficult for beginners to see the details of the methods.</li><li><b>Videos</b>. These provide both visual modeling as well as commentary on how to produce the perfect cup of espresso.</li><li><b>Training classes</b>. There are training locations in most areas that offer courses that range from three hours to a full day on learning the secrets of a barista. Many of these programs also deal with how to care for the espresso machine and offer a certificate upon completion.</li><li><b>Hands-on</b>. Some experienced barista will offer personal training or mentoring for those interested in becoming a barista or in improving their skills.</li></ul>

Whatever you decide to do, if you have a talent for making a great cup of espresso you should consider entering a barista competition. You will meet other people that share your passion for coffee and will certainly get some new ideas to try in your coffee shop.