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The Sweetest Challenge: A judge tells us about Twissen's Tiramisù World Cup

Everything you need to know about the championship for the world's best tiramisu. You too can enter it to win.

Italian Hours

by Lucy Gordan



Fabio Peyla, Francesco Redi and Sara Arrigoni

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This year Redi invited me not only to attend the third championship from November 2-4, but also to be one of the eight judges at its semi-finals. Besides taste we had to judge: how efficiently the contestants had worked, how well they had cleaned up their work station, how well the ingredients combined with each other, and the visual beauty of each final entry. Here's a behind-the-scene look...

Two years ago, just after its first championship, businessman/tourism promoter Francesco Redi, the creator and organizer of the **Tiramisù World Cup**, came to the headquarters of the *Associazione della Stampa Estera* (Foreign Press Association) in Rome to promote his brainchild,

open exclusively to all amateurs worldwide. Last year, on December 14, soon after its second edition, I published “Tiramisù or Pick-me-Up: the ‘Mamma’s Dessert’ Italians Love the Most” about Treviso: tiramisù’s almost-certain birthplace, the *dolce*’s history and its ingredients.



Sara Arrigoni and her Mojito Tiramisu'

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Here's how to participate as a contestant: Before arriving at any practical competition all applicants, over 5,000 this year, have to pass an online test with questions about how to prepare tiramisù, its history, and the contest's rules. "For example," Redi told me, "it's not

common knowledge that on the internet the word tiramisù is searched 2.5 times more than the word prosecco, and 30% more than 'Venice' during Christmastime.”

After this first written selection, like last year, there were around 600 contestants in the first hands-on practical competition divided into two categories: “original” or “creative” recipe. This year these preliminary competitions took place in four different locations: Bibione in June, Friuli Venezia-Giulia in September, Brussels in October (the first location outside Italy), and Treviso (November 1-2), so around 120 contestants in each location.



Mojito Tiramisu, winner in the “creative” category

Rules: It was possible to compete in both tiramisù categories until the finals and some contestants have done so all three years. A few have reached the semi-finals or even the finals more than once. However, a finalist can compete in only one category. Only 30 participants for each recipe reached the semi-finals on the morning of November 3, which were held in two shifts. One at my “creative” table of eight contestants, Camilla Paludetto from Feltre, whose recipe included *amaretti*, cheese and raspberries, reached the finals, which had three contestants for each type of recipe. The runner-up at my table who had competed in “European Selections”: Brussels, Elena Bonali, a resident of Brasschaat (Antwerp) of Milanese origin, had substituted “original” ingredients with gold-leaf, dark chocolate chips, and saffron. Elegant and delicious, but judged “too expensive to serve at a restaurant” by one of my colleagues (chef at a nearby hotel), she’d also reached the semifinals for “original”.

At each competition the contestants received a “kit” of basic ingredients of the “original”: Savoyards, mascarpone, pasteurized eggs, sugar, powdered chocolate, and already-prepared coffee. The “creative” contestants were allowed to substitute up to three of these. Twissen’s

press kit reported that for this year's four contests "Matilde Vicenzi" donated 14,000 Savoyards, Lattebusche 160 kilos of mascarpone, Amadori 11,000 eggs, and Hausbrandt 30 kilos of coffee and 50 of chocolate.

The semi-finals and finals were held in a white "greenhouse", 19th-century in appearance but constructed for the occasion, in Treviso's Piazza dei Signori. The president of the finals' jury was Roberto Lestani, *Presidente della Federazione Internazionale Pasticceria Gelateria Cioccolateria*. Other jurors included chefs, winners of the two earlier championships and food writers. They voted for Fabio Peyla, a 40-year-old marketing manager from Uggiate Trevano (Como), the only male finalist, for his "original" recipe, and Sara Arrigoni, a 27-year-old teacher from Paladina (Bergamo), for her beautifully decorated "creative" mojito (but strictly no-alcohol because against the rules) recipe. Her recipe included brown sugar, mint lime, and alcohol-free rum aroma.



Fabio Peyla and his tiramisu'

The runner-up to Arrigoni was Rossella Favoretto from Mestre whose “creative” ingredients were two types of pepper and pears. In December **the winners will fly to Brazil**, guests of the Italian Embassy there, for the “Week of Italian Cuisine in the World” to be held in Curitiba, Paraná. They will participate at a press conference and at a cooking demonstration. “In 2020, like Brussels in 2019, there will probably be a TWC Selection in Curitiba or somewhere else in Brazil,” Redi told me. “Why Curitiba? Because journalists from there published articles about TWC, and so the Italian community there contacted us. Other TWC Selections in other destinations are also in the plans for 2020 but their dates are still not scheduled. The TWC 2020 semi-finals and finals will be held in Treviso, on October 30-31 (Selections) and November 1 (semi-finals and Gran Finals). So far, yes, for sure the finals will always be in Treviso.”



Peyla's tiramisù, winner in the “traditional” category.

Twissen's next event will be Tiramisù World Cup Junior, to-be-held on December 5th at the Istituto “Leido Rocco” di Lancenigo di Villorba near Treviso. A number of contestants here will have had a parent/contestant in November. Proof that tiramisù can be a family affair, but not only!

Several Italian foods are celebrated worldwide on a specific date. World Nutella Day is February 5; National Pizza Day is February 9; World Artisan Gelato Day is March 24; and World Pasta Day is October 25, and there may be others. Thus, given tiramisù's immense worldwide popularity—for it's hard to find an Italian restaurant outside Italy that does not offer this favorite *dolce*—it was not surprising that at the launching of their book at Eataly in

Trieste, *Tiramisù: storia, curiosità, interpretazioni del dolce italiano più amato*, mentioned in my last year's article, Clara and Gigi Padovani suggested that tiramisù merited the same honor and chose the date March 21. Their reason was: "There's nothing better than tiramisu to celebrate the arrival of spring and leave the grayness of winter behind." After all, tiramisù also translates as "Cheer me up!"

[Lucy Gordan](#)

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Italian Hours

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