



THE OBSERVER'S REPORT

**Culinary Olympics
2004**

Erfurt, Germany

**Graham Hawkes
Secretary General
World Association Cook Society
International Culinary Committee**

BACKGROUND

In July of 2001 the International Culinary Committee of the World Association of Cooks Society (WACS) decided to ask each of the world ranking recognised culinary competitions to allow an observer to be part of each of the same competitions and report back to the WACS Culinary Committee on the observers findings. This is intended to be constructive and to the betterment of International culinary Competitions in the future.

On the occasion of the IKA/Culinary Olympics the German Chefs Association appointed Secretary General of the WACS International Culinary Committee, Mr Graham Hawkes to observe throughout the competition.

The role of the observer is to offer supportive information back to the organisers through the International Culinary Committee which in turn is hoped will assist both competitors and judges in future international culinary events.

To date WACS Culinary Committee observers have covered the following International Culinary Shows:

2002 World Junior Chefs Challenge, New Zealand, Mr Tony Jackson

2002 Food and Hotel Asia, Mr Otto Weibel

2002 Culinary World Cup, Luxemburg, Mr Norbert Schmidiger

2003 The American Culinary Classic, Mr Reinhold Metz

2004 IKA Culinary Olympics, Mr Graham Hawkes

Therefore all comments are intended to be constructive and are made totally without prejudice. Please also note this was just the second time the event had been staged in Erfert

PRELIMINARY LEAD UP TO THE 2004 CULINARY OLYMPICS

The full information package as presented by the organisers, the German Chefs Association, was made available as early as November 2002. The information packs were handed to as many likely competing countries as possible during the World Cup event in Luxemburg. All the information regarding the Culinary Olympics was also available on the website, again from November in 2002.

Hard copies of all guidelines for each category including conditions of participation for national culinary teams, national junior culinary teams, the pastry Olympics, regional culinary teams and individual culinary teams were sent to the presidents of all country members of the World Association of Cooks Society. These were all mailed out late in 2002.

Included in the packages sent out along with the information on the website were the entry forms to all areas of the competition. The information was precise, clear and easily understood. (there can be difficulties in some wording with translation).

THE ADJUDICATORS

Most members of the jury were appointed in January of 2004. Once the jurors had agreed to accept the roll they were sent a full information pack which included:

- What should the juror be examining?
- The criteria for the juror.
- A list of common mistakes to aid the members of the jury.
- A brief explanation on why culinary competitions are held.
- The goals of the cold presentation table.
- The jury procedures/work methods.
- The jury results and how to complete task of evaluations.
- How they should dress.
- How the jury should handle critique from competitors.
- Judging sheets for the area the member of the jury would be judging.
- Protocols for common errors on display platters.

BRIEFINGS PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE SHOW

a) Judges Briefing

- The judges briefing took place at 11.00 am on Saturday prior to the show opening on Sunday on site at the Messe.

- Axel Ruhmann the Chairman of the jury along with Mr Reinhold Metz, the President of the German Chefs Association both took part in the judges briefing.
- They also had an English interpreter so everything was communicated in both English and German.
- The judges briefing was well attended by the members of the jury.
- A very good explanation of the expectations of the judges took place along with plenty of encouragement for all members of the jury to act in objective way in all their decisions at all times.
- It was made very clear if at any time they were in doubt then they should always go to the advantage of the competitor.
- All the senior judges for each section were introduced and all groups were encouraged to get together immediately after the judges briefing to discuss openly their task.
- All members of the jury were also asked to attend the prize giving each day which was to take place at 4.30 in the same area.
- The jurors were invited then to check all the kitchens and their jury rooms.
- They were informed to be on site at 6.50 am each morning.
- Breakfast was available from 5.30 and a bus would be leaving the Inter City Hotel at 6.15 each day.
- It was confirmed entry to the Messe would be from 5.00 am each morning with the teams in the live kitchens being able to enter the kitchens from 7.00 am and would start cooking from 7.30 am.
- It was confirmed also that only five members of the team would be able to be in the kitchen during the cooking time allowed. The sixth person would not be allowed to enter the kitchen until 12.20, 10 minutes prior to the meals being served.
- All jurors were taken through the contents of the pack that each juror was to receive which included all the information the juror would require along with lunch tickets.

All jurors were reminded to ensure it was a level playing field for all competitors at all times.

b) Team Managers Meeting

- ***It is the opinion of the writer the team managers meeting was very poorly attended.***
- Many issues that arose during the competition would not have done so had all the team managers attended the briefing.
- Some of the leading members of the jury also attended the team managers meeting.
- Discussion took place regarding the availability of equipment and it was made very clear by the chief juror and the President of the German Chefs Association that only the equipment that was already in the kitchens would be able to be used by the contestants. No additional equipment was permitted.
- If they required cake mixers or sorbet machines (ice cream making machines) these could be requested from the members of the jury prior to the start of the team competing on their allocated day.
- It was also fully explained the requirements for the Food safety programme and there would be boxes or containers left in each kitchen which the team

manager would place articles of food. These would be collected and held over just in case there were any hygiene problems later.

- A full explanation was also given regarding the requirements of the tasting plates and where they were to be presented.

COMPETITION INFRASTRUCTURE

The Arrival and Reception Area

This was plenty large enough for the numbers of people attending the cold exhibition halls. Hall B & C were both large with sufficient area for the number of tables required. While the Halls B & C were some distance from the international live cooking area I could see no way to alleviate this issue.

All the hot live kitchens were adequately equipped and easily worked in.

There were sufficient judges rooms made available throughout the competition area. I witnessed no problems at all in any of the cold display areas or the hot kitchen areas.

THE OPENING CEREMONY

This took place with a full parade of the competing chefs and an entirely entertaining timeframe with addresses from the Minister along with the World President of WACS and the President of the German Chefs Association.

All in all a very good opening ceremony which concluded with an incredible sound and light display. All competitors who attended the opening ceremony were presented with a presentation gold medal on behalf of the organising committee.

AWARD CEREMONIES

The award Ceremony took place in the suitable area with an excellent attendance from competitors and judges. The ceremony was easy followed; it was kept effective, efficient and well done.

DINING AREAS

Dining areas for the junior section and the military section seemed to operate very efficiently with no major problems encountered. However the dining area within the restaurant of the nation's area experienced huge problems through service. The problem was compounded through the dining period in the early days with slow presentation from competing teams along with confusion from the service staff. This area needs to be addressed for future competitions as it is the entire profession that is on the line.

ACCOMMODATION FOR COMPETING TEAMS

All team managers I spoke to were very happy with the accommodation they had been allocated. They were all complimentary on the way the host chef had assisted them in the kitchen areas and also with the opportunity to find ingredients etc when required.

One area that is of concern is where some countries have made their own arrangements for their own accommodation for the kitchen areas. This caused confusion with the organisers and took away the complete level playing field for all competitors.

SALE OF THE MEAL TICKETS

I saw no problems with the ticket sales on each day in each hot area. *I was told by visitors that they found some days sales had been completed prior to the event*

through sale of the tickets on the internet. This unfortunately was, as I understand, only available in Germany.

FOOD SERVICE IN HOT COMPETITION AREAS

With many guests arriving to dine close to the same time and in some areas there was a great distance from the kitchen to the actual dining table did cause some concerns, especially with the slowness of the service on some particular days. It would be of great assistance if guests purchased tickets for the same competing team only at each table. See recommendations.

ON SITE ROOM FOR OBSERVER

The on site room (in hall 3) was tremendously helpful during the entire competition. It had all that was required with plenty of room.

JUDGES ROOMS

All judges I spoke to found the rooms adequate, although water and glasses would have been most useful. See recommendations.

JUDGES REIMBURSEMENT AND GRATUITY

All judges received within their packages reimbursement forms for travel costs along with a form for a gratuity of 200 Euro which was well appreciated by the visiting jurors.

HOSPITALITY

The German Chefs Association must be congratulated for the outstanding hospitality shown to the visitors during the I.K.A.

This included a general get together on the night prior to the event where all enjoyed local traditional fare and beer, the opening ceremony, a dinner as guests of the Lord Mayor, the celebration of International Chefs Day and the closing ceremony.

THE CLOSING CEREMONY

The closing ceremony took place from 10.00 on Thursday. It was well attended and went according to the programme which was well set out and well executed. All in all a very good opening and closing ceremony took place.

TABLES FOR THE TASTING JURY

In each hot live area there appeared to be a problem with a position for the judges to taste the dishes on. On day one in the Restaurant of the Nations, tasting judges had a trolley from which to taste the meal from. While I appreciate there were sufficient Jury rooms available, it appeared the judges generally prefer to complete the tasting in the public area.

IN CLOSING

My sincere thanks to all who assisted in the success of the IKA Culinary Olympics 2004, especially the staff from the German Chefs Association, the judges, the competitors and the stall holders, and of course the competitors. Last but far from least the President of the German Chefs Association, Mr Reinhold Metz and the head of the jury Mr Axel Ruhmann.

My congratulations on a very successful competition.