



Wednesday, September 20, 2006

Dear President Metz and fellow members of the WACS Executive Board,

The following is an update on progress achieved thus far within our region.

Almost 36 months after my appointment, the newsletter and internal communication within the region has improved vastly. Both the WACS members associations and non WACS associates are responding proactively with news and views. Contact is still being maintained with emails and however person to person contact is still the most effective method of communication and this year the objective is to continue the progress made and to broaden the communication.

In the coming year all efforts will once again be concentrated on effective direct communication with each association, and to market the 2008 congress within the area. Both members and non associated member will be targeted. Further, supplementary journeys to each country are being explored to maximise efficacy and reduce costs. In conjunction I plans are already underway to visit those countries who intend to join WACS in the capacity as Affiliate Member.

2. REGIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

South Africa

This proactive association has recently hosted the first WACS Global Chefs Challenge Continental final at the biannual Hostex show in Johannesburg.

Plans are also underfoot to build a Skills Kitchen at the University of Joburg where the South Africa Chefs Association office and the Centre for Culinary excellence resides.

Egypt

This active association has recently held the Host Sharm Salon Culinaire 07, held February 19-22, 2007 at the Savoy Hotel Sharm El Sheikh. They attended the Regional forum in March (minutes to follow) and participated in the WACS Global Chefs Challenge.

United Arab Emirates

Progress on the WACS congress is well on its way, in addition to the annual competitions that the emirates guild run. Commitment to the congress and all requests from the presidium and board have been met and answered. Alen Tong, Dr Billy Gallagher and I had a meeting in Johannesburg in March, and Billy Gallagher has committed time and resources to help with the scheduling of the Dr Billy Gallagher Junior Forum.

I plan to travel to Dubai in June to help judge the Summer Surprises and have meeting concerning the congress.

Recently held, The Emirates International Salon Culinaire 2007, was a four day culinary extravaganza that included seminars, competitions and demonstrations.

Zimbabwe

This member has not paid its membership for a couple of years, and the contact has not been forthcoming. The lack of dialog and communication is of tremendous concern and at this stage the country has been on the " Observer" list. My recommendation is that we terminate their membership.

Namibia

This member country has not paid its dues for a number of years and recently viable contact has been maintained. A new president was elected and once again finances play a huge role, but the association is very active and has a very close relationship with its neighbour SACA. I had a recent meeting and the conclusion that has arisen is that we terminate the current membership and apply for new membership once a more stable association is present. Contact and assistance will however be maintained.

Israel

Limited contact with the Israeli maintains, and communication is largely restricted due to the language barrier. The association send me regular news in Hebrew and am in the process of sourcing an inexpensive translator.

Mauritius

As always this country is very active internally, however declined to attend the Global Chefs Challenge due to a tropical cyclone which effected the area.

3. COMMUNICATIONS & CONTACT INFO

The next edition of the newsletter is due to be released in May

4. Financials and WACS FEES

Last week, I received an updated membership fees statues report. Budget for year 2006 attached. We need clarification on certain aspects of the whole budget.

5. 2008 WACS Congress

Last full report released in December, Bid document report released in February. All going ahead smoothly, finalisation of business programme needed.

6. Africa Continental Forum

A Forum was held in Johannesburg on the 21st of March.

Still awaiting for minutes as the laptop on which they were saved has crashed and they are being recovered presently. Will send as soon as possible.

7. Global Chefs Challenge

Please see below for the report.



Continental Finals Global Chefs Challenge Report



PREAMBLE

The World Association of Chefs Societies had voted in 2006 to host a Global chef's competition, which would truly reflect a competition from across the globe. As such, continental finals were to be organised by Continental Directors in conjunction with the Culinary Committee and a regional finalist chosen to represent Africa and The Middle East at the inaugural Global Chefs Challenge competition in Dubai 2008.

THE PROCESS

All members of WACS within Africa and Middle East were invited to enter the competition. A document was sent (see Addendum A) outlining the basics of the competition and a response form.

Initially four countries entered:

Egypt

Mauritius

South Africa

United Arab Emirates.

Israel declined, as they would not be able to send a team to Dubai, and they felt that it would be a complete waste of time, money and resources to attend.

Mauritius pulled out two weeks before the event, due to a tropical cyclone which had left some damage on the island.

Teams were invited to Johannesburg with a team member, apprentice and a judge as stipulated in WACS rules.

The South African Chefs Association paid for all accommodation, transport and entertainment for all team participating, and paid for the WACS observer judge, Mr Robert Oppeneder's accommodation, and entertainment.

The day before the event all teams were placed in a sterile environment and shown the mystery basket. Present in the room were also the beverage specialist, who gave the contestants some information on the wines and beverages available.

While the market basket did contain a large amount of protein, this to accommodate the various food regions within the Africa and Middle East, it was never the intention that all protein had to be used.

Further, Arnold Tanzer had made it clear to all contestants prior to the competition that if there were any specific spices that were needed to represent ethnicity, these could be brought in at the menu development stage and handed over.

Cooking commenced at the correct time in the morning under the guidance of Mr. Phillippe Friedmann, who was convenor of the competition under Mr Tanzer. Mr Tanzer had specifically removed himself from direct organisation and mediation, and also refused to judge any aspect of the competition as he felt that it was his duty to remain neutral and represent WACS and the member countries competing as a whole.

The judges were drawn from all competing teams, (not all WACS judges, but many countries do not have WACS judges, so Mr Tanzer made the decision to use judges from each country and complement with additional WACS judges). The WACS observer judge was present at all times and his advice taken into consideration.

Two wine masters judged the beverage section of the competition with one of the judges also being coffee and tea specialist.

Plating of dishes went smoothly and after final dishes were served the judges retired to a separate judges room to deliberate.

I was called in by Mr Oppeneder to hand over the results, but once again declined preferring that the result be keep secrete until the announcement at the Awards Ceremony.

The result was South Africa won with United Arab Emirates Second.

COST

The cost for hosting the competition was significant, and will surely play a bigger part in areas with larger membership.

Careful consideration must be given to where the finals are to be hosted, as this could increase the costs significantly for smaller countries.

While much product was sponsored, and the competition was hosted by the South African Chefs Association during the biannual Hostex show in

Johannesburg, it was difficult to attract enough sponsorship as the competition has almost no credibility.

Further, the cost of getting 5 WACS approved judges to the competition proved to be excessively expensive.

Current estimates put the cost at € 1715 per team over 3 days. Contestants paid their own flight.

POSTSCRIPT

The competition went off well, however there was not much support from The WACS Culinary Committee. Queries were not answered and the document after the Luxembourg meeting only came after the first event, yet repeated requests were unanswered.

The fact that no medal was forthcoming at the event was embarrassing as even though only three member countries finally took part, it still the same amount of effort and cost to them as it will be to other regions.

The certificate is a huge problem. Unilever's logo is on the certificate, yet they had nothing to do with the regional finals. The document was sent in PDF, so could not be changed and was developed for American sized paper! Surely, we are a global association, and consideration can be given to various areas. Also no mention of Continental Director name, only the Presidents and Culinary Committee chair.

Repeated requests for judging sheets ect resulted in the IKA Hot kitchen judging sheet being sent to me .

Still awaiting official WACS Wine Judging Sheets and Media Award criteria.

In general, the feeling is for this competition to be on par with Bocuse D' or to exceed it, lots more focus and energy needs to be put into the competition, especially from the culinary committee.

Firmer guidelines, less imprecise rules and a better communication will alleviate many problems for other regions. I further recommend that a dedicated person on the WACS Culinary Committee take overall responsibility and be a point of reference to all organisers of the competition.