



Belgium gets its first chocolate ambassadors!

Ducobu and Darcis win the first ever International Belgian Chocolate Award – Trophy Prosper Montagné.

On Saturday 10th February 2001 at 8 p.m., the jury announced the two winners of the first International Belgian Chocolate Award – Trophy Prosper Montagné. After 17 hours of slaving over the most beautiful and delicious chocolate creations, **Marc Ducobu** from Brussels and **Jean-Philippe Darcis** from Verviers won the 80% of the points they needed to be declared laureates of the competition.



Marc Ducobu

They were all up and about early Friday morning: Marc Ducobu, Philippe Rhéau, Peter Stevens, Geert Bossuyt and Jean-Philippe Darcis. The five finalists who had been selected for the preliminary rounds of this competition that took place between 4th and 8th September 2000. Their assignment, within a tight deadline of 17 hours, was to convince the many members of the public who turned up and, in particular the jury, of the superior quality of one refined chocolate pastry, 4 different kinds of pralines, a dessert dish and a chocolate showpiece measuring 60cm x 60cm that they were to prepare.



J-P Darcis

The jury, headed by the top chocolatier-pastry chef and Club Prosper Montagné patisserie marshal **Marc Debailleul** – included a number of the biggest chocolate celebrities in the country: **Herman Van Dender, Gunther Van Essche, Pierre Marcolini, Johnny De Neef, Jacques Rouard, Hubert Saelens, Luc Bastiaens** and **Jean-Pierre Wybauw**. They awarded points on the technical perfection and professionalism of each of the participants and watched them all day Friday and Saturday with eagle eyes.

On Saturday afternoon, the creations of the five finalists, all based on the theme of 'Passion',



were presented to a wide selection of famous food specialists, chocolate creators, chefs and chocolate makers. We spotted Paul Wittamer, Jean-Pierre Bruneau, Peter Goossens of Hof Van Cleve and Jean Galler from the chocolate manufacturer of the same name. In teams, they tasted the desserts, the pralines and the cake prepared by the participants. The overall conclusion: the level of quality they were witnessing was absolutely the top in terms of taste and refinement.



A level of quality that could compete without a shadow of a doubt with foreign creations on the international arena. This gives the green light for the international flavour that this competition will take on the 2003 event.

The two winners and the other three finalists were completely exhausted by Saturday evening. Stress, nerves and the pressure from the public and the jury after 17 intense hours were taking their toll on them. And yet each participant still thought of this time as two unforgettable days which hopefully, with one eye on their future career, would bring them fame and recognition. The winners Darcis and Ducobu – two young and extraordinary talents – are ready to take a chance on other international competitions.



Who knows, perhaps their careers will take an international turn following this International Belgian Chocolate Award initiative. As Ambassadors of Belgian Chocolate they will promote the skills of Belgian Chocolate creators and pastry chefs and, of course, the inimitable Belgian Chocolate abroad. Not such a difficult undertaking, according to Marc Ducobu: "...because what makes us so unusual and so unique in the world is the fact that we are Belgian... we have an enormous culinary heritage that the rest of the world will never be able to take away from us."



The prizes that were awarded on Saturday evening – a fabulous trophy designed by the master glass artist Raph Huet and prize money with a total value of €25.000. – have already been gratefully taken home and will keep alive the memory of this unique event. The prize awarded by the technical jury – a leasing contract with Renault – was awarded to Marc Ducobu. We wish both the winners every success.

Barry Callebaut and the Club Prosper Montagné are not letting the grass grow under their feet. They are already working on the next International Belgian Chocolate Award, which will take place in 2003. Preliminary selections will be organised in 2002. Anyone who is interested should contact:

The Secretary for the International Belgian Chocolate Award – Trophy Prosper Montagné – Chloé Gilbos – Aalstersestraat 122 – B-9280 Lebbeke-Wieze. Also by phone or fax: tel+32 53 73 03 81 or fax +32 53 73 05 40



A profile of the winners of the International Belgian Chocolate Award, 2001 edition

Marc Ducobu

Profession: Chocolate Creator – Pastry Chef

Nationality: Belgian – Age: 29

Motivation: “I want to perfect my chocolate skills even further.”

Experience: Mainly job experience at Chocolaterie Mahieu.

Creations: Ducobu found inspiration in the theme of “women” and more especially in the pregnancy of his own wife. In the *showpiece*, he presented her in a transparent creation of almost floating chocolate circles. The butterfly in her hand symbolised the strength and the birth of a new life. His fine pralines, truffles, dessert and pastry surprised the jury with their elegant and tasteful contrasts.



The *cake*: a rich chocolate biscuit with alternating layers of passion fruit crème, dark chocolate mousse, praline crème and a crunchy mougatine made from cocoa beans and almonds.

The *dessert*: a lukewarm chocolate “moelleux” was served with an apple sorbet with pistachio and raspberries in their coulis.

Pralines: made using as a base a raspberry ganache, a duo of almond and hazelnut praline, ganache with vanilla and Baileys and finally a coffee and almond ganache truffle.

Jean-Philippe Darcis

Profession: Independent Pastry Chef

Nationality : Belgium – Age: 29

Motivation: Work placement and work experience at some big names in patisserie and chocolate creations such as Pierre Ledent, Gérard, Lenôtre, Nihoul. Also participation in different competitions.

Experience: “Every competition challenges me to put myself to the test; to see where I stand. It is also the chance to meet first-rate pastry chefs from all over the world. Also to see new techniques and to try them out for myself, to combine new tastes... Not always commercially viable things, but then that’s not always the point about competitions.”

Creations: Woman was also central in Darcis’ chocolate *showpiece*: a beautiful sculpture of a woman’s face in white chocolate was attached to a sort of stem that turned into beautiful flowers in drawn sugar. Here again the woman was the symbol of life and strength.

This chocolate creator from Verviers proved himself to be a master of refinement when it came to taste and vision in the other creations.

His cake was made out of a hazelnut “dacquoise”, a milk chocolate ganache made from origin chocolate Callebaut Java and Macadamia nuts, a crème brûlée with coffee and dark chocolate mousse.

Dessert: He also prepared a warm chocolate “moelleux” with pine nuts and a dark chocolate ganache, which was cooled down with a deliciously subtle rosemary ice cream and sautéed apricots in rosemary honey.

The pralines were a stunning parade: a cardamom and a raspberry ganache in dark chocolate sauce, an almond praline with a hint of cinamon covered in a milk chocolate and, finally, a coat of dark, bitter chocolate wrapped around a filling of two caramel layers and crystallised ginger. The truffle was conspicuous for its thyme and lemon perfumes.

