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An Olympics of Culinary Delights

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22 January 2013



The bi-annual Sirha World Cuisine Summit is like the Olympics for the culinary world. Head to Lyon, France, and discover the ultimate foodie experience.



[\(HTTP://WWW.TRAVELANDESCAPE.CA/AUTHOR](http://www.travelandscape.ca/author)
BY:

MARALYN HILL
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The [Sirha World Cuisine Summit \(http://www.sirha.com\)](http://www.sirha.com) is held every other year in Lyon, France—a mix of trade show, learning centres and competitions. This year, it runs from January 26 to 30.

My first visit to Sirha seemed like it would be once-in-a-lifetime, but I'm now hooked on Sirha and witnessing some of the world's most prestigious competitions, such as the Bocuse d'Or and Coupe du Monde de la Pâtisserie, and learning about the latest and best trends in the culinary industry.

The major competitions involve 12 kitchens in the main auditorium, with morning and afternoon sessions for the various events. As crowds fill the stands, you realize this is an Olympics of food and astounding energy.

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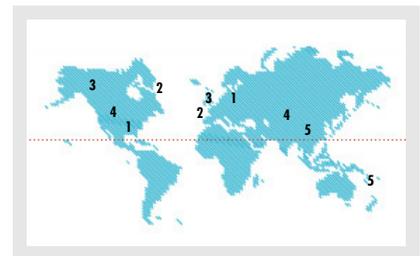
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The biggest draw, the **Bocuse d'Or**, was created in 1987 and is considered the world's greatest gastronomic contest. Sixty countries now compete, with selection rounds in Latin America, Europe and Asia. Culinary cultures of the world are competing, as 24 teams of young chefs work hard to present their country's heritage.

The **Coupe du Monde de la Pâtisserie** was founded in 1989 by Gabriel Paillason and is considered the benchmark competition in the pastry-making world. Selection events take place in Europe, Africa, Asia and South America. The 22 teams, including a pastry chef, chocolate maker and ice cream maker, have 10 hours to produce 12 identical plate desserts, three chocolate desserts, three fruit-based ice cream desserts, and a spun sugar artistic creation, as well as one of chocolate, all topped off by an ice sculpture.



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Credit: Sirha

The **International Catering Cup** started nationally in 2008, and in 2013 is now international. It includes candidates from all continents during the grand final in Lyon.

The new **La Fabrique** is a merger between the "Laboratoire des Pâtisseries" and "Tendances Pain" for bread and pastry creations. It will include the French Baker Cup, European Championship of Sugar, French Championship of Pastry Arts and Frozen Dessert Open.

Some other competitions include the Rhône-Alps Secondary School Canteen Catering Contest, the National Cheese Makers' Competition, the European Butchery Trophy, the Festival of Gastronomic Creativity, the International Oyster-Sellers and Fishmongers Contest, and the Best Winemaker-Chef Contest.



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Credit: Sirha

Sirha has also redesigned its Food Studio to be an idea incubator. They are focusing on four trends: care and

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trust, unexpected emotion, hyper customization and playful accessibility.

A new 2013 section that intrigues me is "The CakeToyz Exhibition." This area will bring together prestigious stylists, designers, pastry chefs and gastronomy chefs to create delicious little sweet monsters. They are sure to be a hit.

This is by far my favourite culinary extravaganza. I've personally learned so much from various chefs manning booths, as well as from their representatives, and I've barely scratched the surface of what Sirha offers. If you can't attend this year, put it on your calendar for 2015.

On a side note, Lyon is a welcoming city and easy to get around. I would suggest staying close to public transportation, since auto traffic moves slowly and taxis are expensive.

MARALYN HILL



Maralyn Dennis Hill, [The Epicurean Explorer](http://www.theepicureanexplorer.com) (<http://www.theepicureanexplorer.com>), is past president of the International Food Wine & Travel Writers Association, effective Dec. 31, 2012. She contributes to numerous publications, and her articles cover luxury market, spas, corporate retreats, business events and culinary tourism, from simple to gourmet. Maralyn says, "I was born to travel and tell the tale. I'm energized by different cultures in every aspect, from food, wine and destination, to conducting business. Travel represents a continual geography lesson."

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