

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Marriott brings back culinary competition, tests top talent via livestream

December 13, 2022



*The test kitchen at Marriott International's headquarters in Bethesda, Maryland will host the final showdown of the Masters of the Craft, which will be livestreamed from the Marriott International website on Dec. 15. Image Credit: Marriott International*

By MARYBETH CONNAUGHTON

Marriott International's Masters of the Craft competition has returned after a two-year hiatus to highlight the top culinary and beverage talent from within its Marriott Bonvoy portfolio.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**  
Plus: Just released  
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Six finalists, three from each category, will square off in a final round, which will stream live from Marriott International's website on Dec. 15. Winners will be gifted a complimentary trip to attend the Aspen Food & Wine Classic in June 2023.

"This year 800 aspiring food and beverage artisans from 80 Marriott properties competed in local and regional Masters of the Craft competitions to prove their prowess through quick-fire cooking and mixology challenges," said Matthew Von Ertfelda, senior vice president of food and beverage for global, U.S. and Canada operations at Marriott International, in a statement.

"During the timed, rapid-fire competitions, each contestant was tasked with incorporating a mystery ingredient into a signature dish or cocktail, which was then judged based on technique, creativity and taste."

### Art and craft

For the first time, the competition will take place at the brand-new Marriott International headquarters in Bethesda, MD, in the company's 4,000-square-foot "Food & Beverage Design Lab" complete with state-of-the-art equipment and furnishings to help inspire innovation and collaboration.

"This year's Masters of the Craft will also shine a light on the organization's commitment to sustainability by sourcing the 'mystery basket' of ingredients from a nearby warehouse that focuses on food waste recovery," Mr. Von Ertfelda said.

"Marriott's global sustainability goals announced this year include cutting food waste in half, responsibly sourcing 95 percent of top 10 priority categories and reducing overall waste to landfill by 45 percent by 2025."

800 members of Marriott Bonvoy's culinary community from 80 properties across the United States and Canada

participated in a series of fast-paced cooking and mixology challenges that took place at the local and regional levels over the course of three months.

During these challenges, participants were asked to include a mystery ingredient in their respective signature dish or beverage. Judges based the resulting creation on taste, technique and creativity.

Finalists from the culinary category represent Marriott Bonvoy's Eastern properties, both sides of the border.

Soumi Hazra, a lead cook at JW Marriott Marco Island Resort, impressed judges with her lemon garlic snapper served with the masala corn that she learned to make from her mother in India.

Shai'ana Moultrie, a cook at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown, learned to cook at only nine and considers food an act of service to others. She placed thanks to her divers scallops with carrot puree, risotto and charred Romanesco.

Canada's sole representative was Mike Wiatzyk, Commis 1 chef from The Westin Harbour Castle in Toronto, whose dishes are informed by his Polish heritage. Judges were wowed by his roasted beef teres major and Ontario fall beets.

Based in Bethesda, MD, the Marriott International portfolio comprises 30 leading hospitality brands and boasts more than 8000 properties across 138 countries.

Making a toast

The creativity of those in the beverage category is evidenced by the names of their winning concoctions.

Sean Noddin, principal bartender at JW Marriott Tampa Water Street, drew on his eight years of experience to produce "That's Amaro," a bourbon-based concoction inspired by his parents' wedding song.

Zack Vosough, bartender at The Phoenician, a Luxury Collection resort in Scottsdale, attended culinary school in New York. His whiskey and corn liqueur drink "Corn to Be Wild" was a hit with judges.

Bartender Tyler Young, from the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel, first became interested in mixology for the joy he saw it brought to consumers' faces. His winning "Tokyo Sour" is made with plum whiskey, egg white and lemon juice.

Judges of the competition will include high-profile names such as Marriott International CEO Anthony Capuano, and author and podcast host Bridget Albert, who herself is a winning competitor in cocktail competitions.

Rick Billings, executive chef-partner for Jose Andres Group, will also judge, as will Wylie Dufresne, who is noted for advancing the molecular gastronomy movement. The panel will be rounded out by Nycci Nellis, founder of The List, which is a go-to guide for Washington, D.C. area restaurants and hospitality.

In addition to recognizing its best chefs and bartenders, **Marriott International** aims to encourage innovation and inspire creativity.

"Masters of the Craft highlights the amazing talent at Marriott hotels and restaurants and also inspires the next generation of rising culinary and beverage stars, while underlining the incredible opportunities that exist to build a rewarding food and beverage career within the Marriott family," Mr. Von Ertfelda said.