



Promoting Pizza Through Sportsmanship



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The U.S. Pizza Team Battles International Pizzaioli For Top Honors

American pizzas rank in the top 10 in European Pizza Championship

Members of the U.S. Pizza Team recently competed in the European Pizza Championship, held Nov. 14 at the European Pizza and Pasta Show in London, England.

Facing off against 39 competitors from six countries, the USPT brought their best pizza recipes to this international Pizza Classica event. Pizzaiolis were limited only by their imaginations, being allowed to use any sauce or toppings they desired. There was just one rule: Make the pies in 10 minutes in an electric deck oven. Each competitor's pie was judged solely on taste and bake, as well as comments and scores from an oven judge.



The USPT members took high honors in a field of esteemed competitors, earning three of the top five scores for "Best in the United States" out of 12 American competitors over-all. Leading the pack was USPT Culinary Coach Gino Rago of Panino's Pizza in Chicago, Ill. Taking best score for the U.S.A., Rago also placed sixth overall in the world, beating out pizzaioli from Italy, France, Sweden, Germany, the

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USPT Culinary Coach Gino Rago and his Out of the Woods Pizza that took the best score in the U.S. and 6th over all!

U.K. and the U.S.

"I was impressed by all the competitor's entries. Everyone had outstanding pizzas," said Rago. "With all the pies influenced by so many different regions of the world, the competition was tough. I just came and did my best. I combined a pizza I recently competed with in Spain with one I did last year in Europe, and the flavors meshed well. I'm very proud of my teammates as well. They all produced some great pizza."

Rago's pie, called Out of the Woods, showcased a toasted hempseed crust topped with Galbani Premio Mozzarella and smoked Scamorza cheeses. Rago then added polenta with poppy seeds, homemade Italian sausage, guanciale and a medley of wild mushrooms. After it was baked, the pie was finished with some mozzarella pearls, a drizzle of arugula pesto made with herbs, grated Parmesan cheese, pistachios and True Horizons CBD-based extra-virgin olive oil. Rago dusted the entire pizza with hemp seeds for flavor and texture.

USPT Athletic Director Dave Sommers, owner of Mad Mushroom in West Lafayette, Ind., took fourth place in the U.S. with his Tre Mele (Apples 3-Ways) pizza. It featured dough made with only flour and apple cider, using the natural fermentation of the cider instead of yeast. This pie was canvassed with a gorgonzola cream, shredded white cheddar and thin slices of Pink Lady, Honey Crisp and Granny Smith apples. Sommers finished it off with fried apple peels, guanciale, gorgonzola cheese and an apple cider reduction.



Dave Sommers' Tre Mele (Apples 3-Ways) Pie. Sommers took 4th highest score in the U.S.



Michael "The Wolf" Athanasopoulos pizza featuring a pesto gouda and amaretto fried pears. The Wolf took 5th in the U.S.

Michael Athanasopoulos of The Lamb & The Wolf in Rocklin, Calif. placed fifth in the U.S. for his pie topped with marinara sauce, gouda infused with basil pesto (which gave it a nice green hue), Mortadella stuffed with fried pistachios and prosciutto, Galbani Ricotta cheese infused with mandarin oranges, and pears that were fried and reduced in Amaretto.

Additional USPT members representing the U.S. were Bruno Brunetti of Panino's Pizza in Chicago; Patrick Maggi of Maggi's Pizza in Damascus, Md.; and Michael Reyes-Casanova of Hearth Wood

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