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### **DECK THE HALLS WITH EDIBLE CHICAGO LANDMARKS**

#### **Pastry Chicago's Sixth Annual Gingerbread House Competition Turns Hotel Sofitel into a Winter Wonderland**

Chicago, Illinois (December 14, 2011) – With Chicago Landmarks as its theme, Pastry Chicago's Sixth Annual Amateur Gingerbread House Competition brought all the highlights of The Windy City to one room. Complete with gingerbread representations of the Water Tower, Shedd Aquarium, Chicago Theater, and Willis Tower, the showroom at Hotel Sofitel Chicago Water Tower attracted Pastry Chicago members and international travelers alike. They were all treated to a demonstration by Chef Pierre Zimmermann of The French Pastry School of Kennedy-King College at City Colleges of Chicago, a reception of cookies and hot chocolate made by Chef Patrick Fahy of Hotel Sofitel, and architectural masterpieces crafted entirely out of gingerbread and candy. While everyone else was savoring their sweets, the panel of professional judges was deliberating over the magnificently detailed gingerbread structures. The top five winners received prizes from KitchenAid and will be on display at Hotel Sofitel through the end of the year.

Though all of the decorations are required to be edible, the Annual Gingerbread House competition is one of the only Pastry Chicago events that isn't judged on taste. Fortunately for the audience, Chef Pierre Zimmermann was in attendance to indulge them with a chewy, crunchy, spicy version of gingerbread with a just-sweet-enough kirsch-based icing. Native to the Alsace region on the border between France and Germany, Chef Pierre grew up eating this winter-time treat, called *Leckerli de Bâle*, at his family's generations-old bakery in the town of Schnersheim. At the conclusion of the demonstration, Chef Pierre added his *leckerli de bâle* to the abundant spread of holiday cookies that Chef Patrick Fahy, Executive Pastry Chef of Hotel Sofitel, had prepared for the attendees. With a cup of rich, homemade hot chocolate in hand and

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the smell of sugar and spice filling the room, everyone was getting into the holiday spirit just in time for the results.

The judges took their time analyzing the details of each gingerbread masterpiece, and based their evaluation on the level of precision and creativity of the details, the representation of the theme, the overall structure of the piece, and the contestant's professionalism. The panel included Nicole Bujewski of Le Flour Bakery; Patrick Fahy of Hotel Sofitel Chicago Water Tower; Chris Kadow-Dougherty of Whimsical Candy; Maria Muñiz of Pastel!...Cakes and More; and Laura Parsons of Westmoreland Country Club, all graduates of The French Pastry School.

After hours and, in some cases, weeks of careful work, the top five winners were thrilled to claim their rewards. Alejandra Cordova was awarded first place for her pitch-perfect gingerbread interpretation of Chicago's Water Tower, and took home a KitchenAid Stand Mixer for her efforts. Second-place winner, Elizabeth Bayliss, built a whimsical version of the historic Engine Company 65, Truck 52 Fire Station located on Chicago's south-side, complete with an edible tile floor, fire engine, and lit Christmas tree. Jessica Wuestnofen won third place with her faithful construction of the Shedd Aquarium with candy cane pillars. Kaitlin Todd's model of The Chicago Theater—with its famous glowing-sign fashioned out of *pastillage*—earned her fourth place. Fifth place went to Robert Marciniak and his clever rendering of The Art Institute of Chicago; not missing a detail, the well-loved bronze lions were decked with their traditional winter wreaths.

Pastry Chicago has had a wonderful year of events and though this was the last competition of the year, there will be many more occasions to celebrate all things pastry in 2012. Join Pastry Chicago's sister organization, [For the Love of Chocolate Scholarship Foundation](#), on February 25<sup>th</sup> to celebrate their annual fundraising gala. All proceeds will go to funding scholarships for future students of The French Pastry School and [tickets are on sale now](#). For more information on future Pastry Chicago events and photos of this month's winning gingerbread houses, please visit [www.pastrychicago.org](http://www.pastrychicago.org).



About Pastry Chicago

*Pastry Chicago is a group of passionate people who love and enjoy all forms of pastries. Pastry Chicago is made up of professional pastry chefs, students of the art of pastry and people who enjoy eating and the visual art of pastry. The goal of our group is to experience the Art of Pastry in all its glory at educational fun events across the city of Chicago and at the same time promote the fantastic talents of all the Artisans who work at the craft of producing beautiful delicious pastries.*

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For more information on Pastry Chicago, please visit [www.pastrychicago.org](http://www.pastrychicago.org), or contact  
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