



Casting to Win

Is there a place for silicone molds in pastry competitions? The 2007 Culinary Casting Challenge, sponsored by the Chicago School of Mold Making, wanted to put this question to the test. Instructed to use silicone molds in as many different ways as possible, seven student chefs came up with great answers.

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Photographs by Dan Carmody www.HaigwoodStudios.com

A year ago, friends Paul Bodrogi and Michael Joy hatched a plan to organize a new type of pastry competition. Chef Bodrogi, an experienced competitor and pastry chef instructor at the Art Institute of Atlanta, was eager to get started.

Typically, competitions place restrictions on the use of silicone molds in the kitchen. Our plan was to turn the tables. In this event, held in March at the Art Institute of Atlanta, each student was outfitted with the same ten silicone molds made at the Chicago School of Mold Making. This way, each person would be starting from the same point, with exactly the same equipment. Their skill, creativity and commitment would be the only variables.

Each competitor was fully aware this competition was about the creative use of molds and their ability to transform a casting into something truly unique. They knew that if they created showpieces only reflecting the shapes of the molds, they would be judged harshly.

The chefs competed for the right to keep their set of molds, with the highest points going to the chef who showed the most skill in manipulating his/her molds and castings. The rules were simple: create a sugar showpiece and chocolate amenity using the silicone molds in two five-hour sessions. The judges, led by Art Institute chef instructor Satoko Taniguchi, evaluated the creative use of the molds, kitchen skills, degree of difficulty, artistic value, originality, and fulfillment of the competition's theme, "Modern Nature."

With no more than two advanced pastry classes each and working with personal budget less than \$100.00, we were impressed with what each student chef was able to achieve. Let's meet the contestants...

Many thanks go to Chef Bodrogi for spending so many extra hours with his students to help them prepare. His dedication to teaching is an inspiration to the profession.



Randy Williams took first place with his aquatic theme showpiece



Randy Williams, inspired by what he saw on the Food Network, was eager to become a first time competitor. His clean work, strong skill set and creative abilities resulted in a first place win.



Larisa Slaughter and her assistant work carefully to press a Showpeel™ into warm isomalt to create a textured impression.



At 19, Brandon Neisler was the youngest competitor. Here, he is shown using silicone Noodles™ to create custom shapes for his chocolate amenity.

Great idea: Using tape to bind the Noodle into geometric shapes with corners.



Scott Millsbaugh, a full-time fireman, works effectively under pressure. Pouring multiple sections at once, he was the first to complete his sugar showpiece.



Maia Suzuki had watched chef instructor Bodrogi work on numerous competitions. She learned early that working clean and with a clear plan would help her through any difficulties.



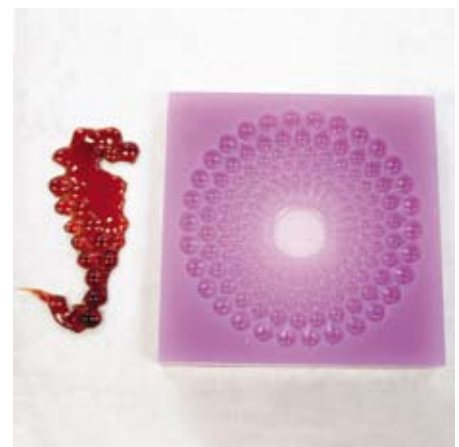
Aaron Salvo is constantly learning by surrounding himself with innovative people. Shown here working with his assistant, they are assembling an isomalt butterfly created with Showpeels.



Irene Buntaran assembles her well designed showpiece. Unexpectedly, her assistant did not show on day two. Fortunately, fellow competitor Scott Milspaugh had already finished his showpiece and stepped in to assist. Great Sportsmanship!



Great idea: Aaron Salvo used 3M™ Polyimide Film Electrical Tape to manipulate the shape of the 1" cube mold. Made of silicone, the tape's maximum operating temperature is 180° C or 356° F.



At every turn, Randy Williams was scoring points by transforming various molds into objects completely different from what they were originally intended. Here, the Mercury Ripple silicone mold has become a sea horse.



Scott displays his city-scape adorned with butterflies and wings. Great color choice and balance of geometric and organic shapes!



Aaron presented this giant stylized architectural flower. He made the bold choice of constructing the entire piece horizontally. Upon completion, he lifted the showpiece vertically (very risky) and marched it to the judging table.



As Larisa added a butterfly to her embossed center structure, people began to gather outside the kitchens. Within an hour of finishing time, the hallways were filled with friends, family, co-workers and staff who gathered around to watch.



When the final bell rang, six judges completed their decisions and announced the winners; Randy, first; Maia, second; and Brandon, third. Maia's cool recovery of a broken showpiece and her consistently clean kitchen paid off.



Brandon Neisler took third place. Throughout the competition, he made large, bold shapes and used his time well. The judges were impressed that such a young competitor could pull this off without the help of an assistant.



Irene's showpiece was beautiful. Unfortunately, her assistant's absence on the second day caused her to finish the showpiece late. The deductions cost her a place at the podium. We know we will see Irene again soon in another competition.

*Isolmat and Chocolate
supplied by
Albert Uster Imports*



Left to Right: Anne Marie Pizzi, Chef Paul Bodrogi, Irene Buntar, Scott Millsbaugh, Randy Williams, Jeannie Newton, Megan McManus, Aaron Salvo, Delicia Love, Larisa Slaughter, Brandon Neisler, Maia Suzuki and Jackie Frazier.