

Kimberly Stavely, 1st Place, 2007 Eastern Region Canadian Barista Champion, Matter of Matter of Taste Coffee Bar, 119 King Street Kitchener, ON

Back in August 2006 I dropped my resume off at a coffee bar in downtown Kitchener called Matter of Taste. Little did I know that eight months latter I'd become 2007 Regional Barista Champion!

The competition was intense! Preparation required lots of hard work and dedication. The training from Dawn and Phong Tran was vital to my win. There are so many variables that you forget. The hardest and most stressful part of competing was making sure I knew how to adjust these variables to ensure an excellent product.

I have always enjoyed the adrenaline rush of competition, and this was my best experience yet! The most stressful part of the day came before I competed. I was very nervous, but once I had my grind set and my espresso looked excellent, my nervousness slowly died and my fifteen minutes of fame began. The proudest moment was when I poured four perfect 'monk head' cappuccinos.

Life as a 'Barista' taught me discipline, give me the confident in my work and myself. I feel very lucky to have had dropped my resume off back in August 2006.

The concept at Matter of Taste is simple – to offer and be the best in specialty coffee. Owner Dawn Tran and Phong Tran are dedicated to the professional training of barista and instilling an appreciation of coffee to both employees and customers alike. Since opening in March 2004 in downtown Kitchener, Matter of Taste has gain reputation for quality, passion for the coffee culture and for creating beautiful culinary art of coffee. Matter of Taste has trained some of Ontario's best baristi. In fact, some of the baristi have competed at some level at the Canadian Barista Championship. At Matter of Taste, we are constantly striving to raise the standards of quality and services.

Dawn Tran, 2nd Place, Matter of Taste Coffee Bar, 119 King Street Kitchener, ON

Five years ago, I did not know much about coffee. I open the coffee bar with basic understanding of coffee but I knew I had to learn a lot more. Along the way, I stumbled upon the art of coffee. I saw these beautifully prepared coffee drinks with rosettas and hearts on them. I thought to myself how in the world did they do that? At that moment, I told Phong that if we are to distinguish ourselves that this would be it. We worked hard, developed our skills and taste palettes. Now four years later, Matter of Taste Coffee Bar has brought latte art, coffee culture and the craft of barista to the Kitchener-Waterloo Region.

Currently at Matter of Taste, we have five fully trained baristi. One of my responsibilities is to train all new staff with the basic knowledge of coffee and customer service. If the new employee meet our requirements then we put them into our barista training program.

I really enjoyed the experience of competing at this year's Canadian Regional Barista Competition. Creating a signature drink was by far the most enjoyable part. First, I had to visualize in my head how the ingredients would taste with coffee. From there it was trial and error to get the correct ratio. Of course, there is the exhilaration of the competition. I was not overly nervous going in, but I felt a greater level of confidence in my ability to perform under pressure after the competition.

Cathy So, 3rd Place, Avenue Café & Bistro, University Avenue, Toronto, ON

This is the second competition for Cathy So who is a barista at Avenue Café & Bistro. Opened in the summer of 2005, Avenue Café & Bistro is located in the downtown core at the corner of University and Dundas, the Avenue Cafe and Bistro combines sleek design and ambiance, with a wide array of specialty sandwiches and menu items seldom found in the area. The cafe caters to a mostly business crowd that desires quality food quickly and at reasonable prices.. In addition, the Avenue Cafe, provides catering services to nearby offices. The Avenue Cafe offers its guests Illy Coffee and a vast selection of specialty beverages such as smoothies. Guests are treated to a minimalistic-chic design. The white walls are adorned with cool designs, art, flat screen tv's playing black and white classic films and funky music in the background. The Avenue Cafe always strives to deliver on its motto "Excite

your Senses". . Cathy's signature beverage was "Plum it Up", a mixture of plum powder, honey, milk and espresso.

Ivonne Ramirez, 3rd Place, Dolce Gelato & Cafe. 697 College St., Toronto

Dolce Gelato is located in the heart of Little Italy has been opened to the public for over a year now. This gelato café have been managed by one of it's owners, Ivonne Ramirez who started learning this trade and became a Barista five years ago. At Dolce Gelato & Café we proudly serve a blend of seven of the highest quality espresso beans to ensure a rich and creamy espresso we also offer 42 homemade gelato and sorbet flavors. Among them is the MENTA flavour which was used to make the signature drink "Bela Menta" for this year Canadian Eastern Regional Barista Competition .

Having started competing one year ago Ivonne finds the experience each time exciting and gratifying for being recognized this year with the 3rd place in this competitive field of being a barista in a City surrounded by so many excellent coffee shops.