



GUIDING PRINCIPAL

Veteran Chef **Stéphane Cheramy** will Lead Team USA
Into the Prestigious Coupe du Monde de la Patisserie

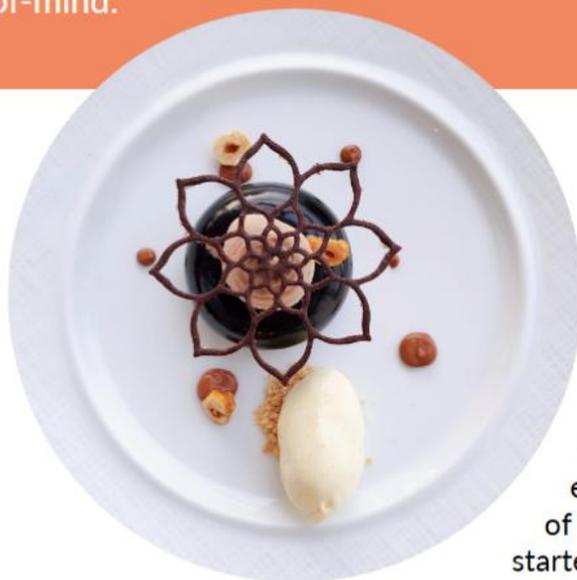
By **Brian Cazeneuve**

Stéphane Cheramy is molding again. It is not a new posture for the Executive Pastry Chef who oversees the sweet side of the AAA 5 Diamond Ritz-Carlton in Orlando to be dealing with custom molds. Only now he is not just shaping yummy desserts; he is helping to mold a national pastry team.

In his day job, Cheramy blends textures, flavors and ingredients. Now, he needs the perfect pinch, dollop and spoonful of chefs with complementary skill sets – for ice, sugar and chocolate – in perfectly harmonious balance to produce the most competitive U.S. squad at the Coupe du Monde de la Pâtisserie in Lyon, France. The competition is not until January 2027, but the aprons are tied and the ovens are on. The pastry chefs who will constitute the 20 teams that qualify for the final are burning the late-night candles, but hopefully not the desserts. Even with a year to prepare, the chefs are already in a prep-kitchen-state-of-mind.

First there are continental qualifying competitions. The U.S. must place among the top four of eight teams that will first sharpen their knives at the Americas qualifier in New Orleans on July 25. If all bakes well, Cheramy will lead his squad into the arena -- with oven mitts rather than boxing gloves – in Lyon.

As President of Pastry Team USA, Cheramy is the chef with the organizational brio behind all the group of molders who will represent the United States over the next year. “It is the chance to bring our best with the world’s best,” Cheramy says. “It is a responsibility and we don’t take it lightly.” The U.S. did not compete at the previous Coupe in 2025 when Japan, France and Malaysia took the three podium places. In 19 previous editions of the Coupe du Monde, Team USA reached the podium four times, winning gold once, in 2001. Cheramy’s native country of France has won the most gold medals, eight, of any nation. “I believe this U.S. team can be



very successful,” Cheramy says, “but we will need everyone’s full expertise.”

Cheramy began forming his own palate of expertise in the South of France when he started hanging out with his neighbors near Toulouse, where he grew up. “There were four brothers,’ Cheramy explains. “One was a model; one was a sommelier; one was a bodyguard for celebrities and one was a chef. They told me stories about luxuries and hotels and fine dining. I thought I could become a chef.”

Cheramy spent two years as an apprentice, then moved around and staged during his time off in the summer. One such stage was on the world stage, at the magical restaurant Le Cirque in New York City. It was a luxurious location right near Central Park, drawing rave reviews and a celebrity clientele.

Next, Cheramy helped open the extravagant Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas, where the owner Steve Wynn did not hesitate to bust the budget if needed. The Bellagio was overnighing food ingredients from New York and California because Vegas was known more for cheap buffets and whipped cream from a can than fine dining and fresh ingredients. That had to change.

But while the glitz and glam of city life was a worthwhile experience, it wasn't an easy fit for the lad from the South of France. Cheramy called Chef Norman Love in slower sun-soaked Florida, where he was overseeing dining for the Ritz Carlton hotels. The Ritz-Carlton Group brought Cheramy aboard and he has stayed with them at Florida locations for a quarter century. Now he oversees a staff of 32 at 14 different restaurants.

On a given day when Cheramy isn't travelling to check out other Ritz-Carlton properties, he'll tour the kitchens in Florida, consult with the chefs, drop by the bakery program on the opposite side of the resort, check in with the cafes, meet with the executive chefs to review weekly plans, check

emails and assign tasks to the team members based on corporate events and special requests.

"I've seen so many things," he says. No variance in dessert experience seems too great for Cheramy: You want proposals, weddings, themed events, client outings for a sales team, plated-desserts for hundreds, gluten-free, cooky, traditional, boozy, family-friendly? Cheramy and his team will be with you in a moment. It is no wonder the begetter of baguettes would be tapped to lead the U.S. delegation.

"You have to be prepared for what you don't expect," he says. In theory, the format is clear: over ten hours, the team must produce chocolate desserts to share, frozen desserts, restaurant desserts, several tasting desserts, one sculpture each in chocolate, sugar and ice. Judges also grade teams on how they work: Do they leave a mess? Do they practice sustainability? Do they leave a lot of trash? Are they composed and purposeful or are they yelling and scampering about as if they are juggling hot potatoes? It's straightforward . . . until it isn't. It's Cheramy's task to anticipate hurdles.



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“Maybe you arrive and the freezer is not cold enough, so you cannot unmold your stuff,” he says. “I noticed this past cycle, a lot of people used dry ice. The dry ice is dangerous because it can burn your products too.

“Also, it’s a very big room and then it’s in the winter. So when you start, it’s very cold, but then the public starts to come in. They bring drums and so the room gets very hot and very loud. The temperature affects the product. That’s why the team comes to France two weeks in advance so they can seclude themselves from everything and so they don’t get destabilized.”

In monthly training sessions Cheramy organizes during the year and the lead up to the event, he will sometimes deliberately dislodge a showpiece in a place it might logically break during competition, forcing his chefs to make the sort of quick fix they would need during an event as they transport the piece from the kitchen to the buffet.

“It’s just like the Olympics or like the Super Bowl,” Cheramy says. “It’s not just about making pastries; it’s about mental health and

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physical health, organization and efficiency.”

To reach the final group of candidates for the U.S. squad, chefs competed at a domestic event in Chicago last September. The trio chosen from among those candidates is “exceptional,” according to Cheramy, and includes the following chefs:

Jordan Snider, Team Captain (sugar), Executive Pastry Chef at the Sanctuary Kiawah Island Golf Resort in South Carolina:

Says Cheramy: “He is the captain. It is a big responsibility, because if two chefs are not getting along, it will be obvious that the team is not working well together. I can tell you the President of the competition is Pierre Herme and he doesn’t like people being loud, bringing an attitude and getting emotional.”

Nicholas Forte (ice), Corporate Pastry Chef West coast at Tao and Hakkasan Group Hospitality in Las Vegas:

Says Cheramy: "I liked him a lot in Chicago, It was his first time doing this competition, but he was fully aware of his environment, Some competitors came in with a lot of equipment, and then he did this competition with almost nothing. He did an incredible job. As soon as he was selected, he was sending me texts and emails and calling me. He already secured a coach in Las Vegas. He already started to practice. He's giving 300 percent. If you have the right mindset and the right focus, you can do anything."

Francois Behuet (chocolate), Executive Pastry Chef at the Ritz-Carlton and JW Marriott L.A. Live in Los Angeles:

Says Cheramy: "He's a machine. He came super prepared. He came in with a full pallet of equipment and he did an excellent job with the showpieces and the entremets. He blew us away."

The squad's alternate is Sarah Helzer, Executive Pastry Chef and Consultant at the Nomadic Table & Primrose in Steamboat Springs, Colo.

The team behind the team is an all-star cast, as well. Cheramy reminds you half a dozen times that there is a fantastic group of board members – he raves about the tireless work of Donald Wressell, the team's Director of Operation – and a newly created Pastry Council (see page 102) supporting Team USA and the world of pastry in the U.S. Tasks are volunteered and funding is never guaranteed.





“We need sponsors,” Cheramy says. “That’s the big advantage that France and Japan and Italy have. They have big funds. I’m talking big money. Every time you train or you compete, you have to fly people from all over the country, get the hotels, pay for all the ingredients, the equipment, the custom molds and things like this. We are working right now on getting a nonprofit certification from the IRS. That would help us get more support. But right now, it’s a big stress. We hope to get enough funds to not only take care of the team but also invite younger chefs to fly with us and practice with us so that we can teach them and to help the younger generation get demos, experience, practice and so forth.”

A podium spot will take dedication, but it is not impossible. “I was talking with an MoF, a world champion,” Cheramy says. “He

helped Team Japan and Team France, so he has a tremendous amount of experience, and he said we have the potential to get on the podium, for sure. We have the right people, the right coaches. We have to work clean and we have to work smart, but we have the potential.

“At the same time, we have to be aware – how can I put this? – with America’s politics now, we have to compete with respect. It’s important to represent the USA in the right way. People will watch for this.”

With the watchful oversight of Cheramy and his leadership group, the team is in good hands. Draw back the curtain as the grand showpieces arrive. They could not happen without the man behind the scones waving his magic wand. And his golden spatula.