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Association sans but lucratif
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4th International Contest « Chocolates processed at origin» AVPA-Paris 2024

Rules up to date on November 1st 2023

The aim of the Agency for the Valuation of Agricultural Productions-AVPA is to participate in the recognition of exceptional producers and, therefore, in a better value of their work. It focusses particularly on the products processed at origin: when the producer becomes a taster of his own harvest, he can reach the gastronomic heights that for example Europe prides itself in terms of wine, olive oil or cheese or the Orient in terms of tea.

AVPA is working without economic, societal or ecological prejudice and the only parameter it wants and can take into account is taste. Its pragmatism in the face of such complex concepts as Sustainable Development, Geographical Identity, Trade Equity, its knowledge of rural modes of organization ranging from large industries (leading behind them a whole agricultural production chain), to independent producers grouped in cooperatives, possibly supported by Products Boards, leads it to conclude that it is each community or collectivity that must find in its own roots and genius the system that allows the best development of people and the best development of collectivity.

AVPA firmly believes that quality is the best way for the producer to regain the pride of his work and a fairer remuneration for himself and the entire local industry, when the product is developed at origin. However, this quality must be recognized, right down to the end consumer. It is this ambitious goal that AVPA is carrying in a complex gastronomic universe:

-There is no universal good taste and it would be illusory to talk about the best chocolate in the world. On the other hand, there are homogeneous categories of chocolates and it is then possible, in each category, to determine which chocolate or which chocolates are best expressing the type and qualities of the category concerned.

-The preparation of chocolates can significantly change the perception of them. Mastering the roasting, grinding of the beans and the choice of ingredients and their proportion, the chocolate manufacturer becomes master of the product to be developed.

In order to ensure full transparency and total fairness between the participants in this competition, AVPA has established this regulation in French, Spanish and English. It is available to anyone who requests it.

Art 1 : Participants

Any company (or person) can participate in the competition, regardless of its legal nature and its social purpose. However, it must:

- Be able to inform the competition organizers of the geographical origin (country, region and if possible estate or cooperative) of the cocoa processed for the chocolate presented.
- Certify that the development of the product proposed for the competition was carried out in the country from which the cocoa originated.
- Certify that chocolate (whether it is the product or the main ingredient of the product participating in the competition) has been processed "from raw cocoa to the bar or other types of chocolates" in the country in which the cocoa is harvested.
- Be the owner of the brand or appellation of the product presented.

Registrations are only taken into account from companies (or persons):

- Up to date for payment of their membership fees and participation fees,
- Having properly completed their registration form,
- Having delivered the necessary samples under the required conditions.

By simply filling out and signing their registration form for the competition, participants agree to this regulation that they have previously read. Products arrived out of time or in a condition that does not allow their tasting or in case of too short "Product use limit dates" will not be admitted into the competition but membership fees and technical costs will remain due to AVPA.

Art 2: Jury

AVPA has a jury of six to twelve members.

The members of the jury are French speaking; they are professionals in the sector (producers, chocolatiers, distributors), chefs, gastronomes, or savvy consumers.

The main characteristics of this jury are:

- Its cultural and linguistic homogeneity,
- Its plurality because it includes:
 - Chocolate and cocoa professionals
 - Taste professionals,
 - Enlightened amateurs.

It thus gives a substantial opinion to a gastronomic culture and a good "French" taste that reaches a form of universalism by the high competence or gastronomic culture of its members who can thus highlight exceptional productions.

The chairman of the jury is appointed by the AVPA secretariat. He agrees with the final constitution of the jury and organizes the operation of the jury.

Inside the jury, a "technical committee" of at least three members, headed by the President, participates in the classification and the preliminary analysis that allows the organization of the world of chocolates in competition. He tastes and grades the products of which the best will be offered to the sagacity of the second jury. Jury decisions are sovereign, and no challenge will be accepted.

Art 3: Chocolates in contest

It belongs to the participant:

- To send the products in their commercial packaging (sales packaging to the end consumer).
- To send at least four sales units in bars (at least 100 grams or 4 oz, or their weight equivalent if the bars are smaller...) or 4 packets of at least 10 servings (fancy chocolates or candies), for a total of 400g. or 40 servings.
- To provide a "Product use limit date" adapted to the dates of the competition:
 - For dark chocolate bars and fancy chocolates at least 3 months after the limit date for samples delivery to AVPA,
 - For stuffed chocolates at least 3 weeks after the same delivery date to AVPA.
- To ensure the protection of the product, thanks to packaging resistant to thermal or physical shocks, and avoiding possible contamination by smells in packaging. Upon arrival at AVPA the products will be kept in a dry atmosphere and in temperatures of 15 to 19 degrees Celsius.
- To fill out the registration form that will be given to him, including:
 - the genetic variety (s) of the cocoas used in the product,
 - the harvesting methods for the cocoas used in the product (cocoa produced on the estate, cocoa purchased from a group of independent producers, an association of producers, a wholesaler, or other cases to be specified),
 - the geographical location (of the estate or cooperative or producer's association) where the cocoas have undergone post-harvest processing (fermentation/drying),
 - how cocoa is processed into chocolate (a type of roaster and the volume of production of the conch and mill/shredder),
 - the exact distribution of all ingredients: cocoa mass, cocoa butter, cocoa powder, sugar, milk, other ingredients etc...
 - the volume of chocolate of the same characteristic developed during the current year,
 - the economic and social model of production: industrial/artisanal/estate
 - In the case of "organic" or "fair trade" chocolate, a copy of the organic or fair-trade certificates, if any, must accompany the sample.

Art 4 : Classification

The products are classified in homogeneous tasting categories and then in professional categories:

- Tasting categories

Tasting categories include product types and organoleptic families.

Class 1: Product Types: Five product types were selected for the contest:

Dark chocolate "bean to bar" in bar

This "bean to bar" chocolate is the subject of a special session with its own jury. It must be produced from beans harvested from trees belonging to the chocolate maker (tree to bar) or beans purchased to third parties (bean to bar).

It must have a percentage greater than or equal to 65% cocoa content (total sum of cocoa weight and cocoa butter or cocoa powder possibly added). It may not contain any added adjuvants, emulsifiers or flavourings except for sugar, which is authorized.

Black chocolate in bars with 65% cocoa minimum

This chocolate must contain a percentage of 65% or more cocoa content (total weight cocoa, cocoa butter or cocoa powder possibly added). Not any additives, emulsifiers or added aromas may be added. In total, it can only contain cocoa or cocoa derivatives (cocoa, cocoa butter, cocoa powder, mucilage, cocoa bean flakes) without any other type of ingredient, except sugar which is allowed.

Fancy chocolates

These chocolates can be black, white or milk, its shape may vary (square, round, rectangle, other) but it must be solid (not stuffed). It may have added ingredients such as milk powder, aromas, fruits, spices, etc.

Chocolate candies or "stuffed" chocolate bars

These chocolates have a more or less creamy center, coated in a layer of dark, white or milk chocolate. They may have added ingredients such as milk powder, aromas, fruits, spices, etc.

Cocoa derived products

These products are made from cocoa beans and can be tested directly. They can be toasted, caramelized, etc. They can have added ingredients such as milk powder, cocoa, aromas, fruits, spices, etc.

These types of products could eventually be subdivided into subcategory if this were necessary for a better assessment of the Jury.

Class 2: Organoleptic Families

Organoleptic families are defined by the Technical Committee, which assigns each product to the family that best suits it in order to organize all the products into a coherent universe that allows a qualitative classification within each of the organoleptic families defined as homogeneous as possible. The Technical Committee will be free to form as many families as it sees as necessary to define the organoleptic universe of the samples received. Organoleptic families can vary from product type to product.

Class 3: Types of production.

By type of production, we mean the socio-economic model presiding over the development of the sent samples. Four groups are selected:

Estate chocolate - chocolate, processed in the estate from cocoa produced there, where it was harvested, to which the harvester can add cocoa from neighbouring estates.

NB "bean to bar" chocolates are belonging to this category.

Regional chocolate - chocolates presented often by a local or regional processor for which chocolates presented in the competition are made from cocoas from a specific province in the case of geographical denomination or, at least from cocoas harvested in the country of the processor.

National chocolate – chocolate presented by a national or international industrialist carrying out the processing in the country from which the cocoas are harvested.

Collective organisation – chocolate presented by a collective organisation with national or international activities carrying out the processing in the country from which the cocoas are harvested.

The products can then be divided between 5 types of products and N organoleptic families. Each of the categories thus defined can then be segmented into 4 types of production if the number of products allows it and if the differentiation of the grades obtained confirms the consistency of such a ranking.

Art 5 : Organisation of the tasting

The AVPA secretariat will hand over to the Chairman of the jury the set of competing products repackaged so that their origin is not recognizable. Each product will have a number. Products for which the candidate has requested feedback will be identified with a distinctive sign.

For each tasting category, the Technical Committee will define the desired qualities and disqualifying defects in the form of a tasting grid in the form of a list of descriptive elements. A descriptive element, at a certain level of intensity, can be considered a quality in some categories and a defect in others. At a different level of intensity, a quality can become a defect....

Each item will be rated from 0 to 10 depending on its interest (10 the best, 0 the worst) in the category and weighted according to its importance in relation to the final score that will be the addition of the weighted scores of each item.

The tasting will take place in an isolated, quiet, fragrance-free and without parasitic aroma. Jurors will be equipped with an electronic tablet and the appropriate tasting accessories will be provided (water, mouth rinse, towel...).

The Chairman of the Jury assisted by one of the members of the Technical Committee will conduct a sequential organization of the tasting so that the jurors can fully appreciate the qualities of each chocolate.

Art 6 : Part of the Technical Committee

After the definition of the analysis grid already mentioned, the Technical Committee will proceed to the tasting of the products in competition.

At the end of this tasting, the AVPA secretariat and the Chairman of the jury will analyse the consistency of the results (verification of the decoy products, homogeneity of the judges' grades) and, if necessary (case of a juror noting excessively, or withdrawal of a juror during the tasting) will be able to correct the results which will be established as the average of the total score and the standard difference of each product.

Category by category, they will define the minimum score that allows the product to be considered a Gourmet product and to be presented for a tasting at the second Jury. They may eventually accept products that would be below the minimum grade but whose standard deviation would be significantly higher than the standard deviations found.

Art 7 : Evaluation of Jury

Products that have passed the Technical Committee filter are presented at the tasting by the second Jury, which proceeds in the same way as the Technical Committee. The chairman of the jury may interrupt the tasting for a sharing of analysis that allows, at least for the first tastings, to ensure a good understanding of the descriptive elements and their rating. It will do so systematically for products that AVPA has committed to provide feedback to their producer.

At the end of this tasting, the characteristics of each product as defined in its registration can be revealed to the jury.

The AVPA secretariat and the Chairman of the jury will analyse the results as they had done previously for those of the Technical Committee.

Art 8 : Awards

The Chairman of the Jury and the AVPA secretariat then have in hand the results of the Technical Committee and those of the second Jury. It will be up to them to weight the results given by both tasters' bodies in order to arrive for each product at a final grade and a standard deviation. On an equivalent grade, the product with a higher standard deviation will be preferred.

For each category, the Chairman of the Jury and the AVPA secretariat, based on the evaluations calculated above, will determine the distinctions awarded to competitors. If the level and number of products in competition allows it, they can award the best products in each of these categories one of the following medals: "Gourmet Or", "Gourmet Argent" or "Gourmet Bronze", depending on their ranking, all other products submitted to the Jury having already received the "Produit Gourmet AVPA" award.

They will have a duty not to award a medal to products whose commercial packaging does not allow good protection. In this case, they will inform the candidate of the specific reason that prevents him from awarding a medal despite the quality of his product.

They may be able to specifically analyse the results of products advertised as organic or fair trade and, for these products as for others, they will have the opportunity to create special distinctions or special awards.

Art : 9 Award ceremony

The organizers of the competition will determine in due course the exact dates of the various stages of the competition, which will be concluded with an awards ceremony where the winning chocolates will be unveiled.

The organizer does not mention producers and products that will not have a medal.

This ceremony may eventually be duplicated, especially in other consumer countries or in countries or regions of production, at the request and at the expense of one of the participants.

Article 10 : Obligations of the participants

The producer undertakes to exhibit his "Product Gourmet" diploma or his AVPA medal diploma in commercial, fixed or temporary spaces (such as exhibitions and shows) that he will host during the two years following the achievement of these awards.

For this purpose, the producer will be able to edit as many reproductions as necessary.

To participate in the association's promotional effort at the end of the competition, the winners agree to send AVPA a quantity of sales units, for each awarded chocolate, according to the following distribution:

Estate Chocolate: 20 products - Regional Chocolate: 40 products - National Chocolate: 60 products
Collective organisation : 20 products for each member participating in the contest

The producer who received a medal will be able to represent it on his commercial packaging under the terms of the licensing agreement issued each year by AVPA and which will be signed by the producer.

AVPA will be free to mention the names of the winning producers and reproduce their packaging for the good information of the public concerned by this competition.