

Celebrating Pasta with Primo di New York

Mila Tenaglia and Joelle Grosso (June 29, 2017)



The James Beard Foundation hosted the second edition of Primo di New York, a competition between the city's top chefs, organized by Pastificio Di Martino di Gragnano. Ten finalists in the renowned "performance space" faced off with forks and knives in order to win the grand prize. The champion? We'll reveal it to you.

Italian pasta company [Pastificio di Martino](#) [2] and the [James Beard Foundation](#) [3] recently held Primo di New York, a competition that looks for the best pasta dish in the Big Apple. [James Beard](#) [4] was an American chef, cookbook author, teacher, and television personality who created this foundation whose mission is to "celebrate, nurture, and honor chefs and other leaders making America's food culture more delicious, diverse, and sustainable for everyone."

Primo di New York based on the pasta from Gragnano's Pasta welcomed 60 chefs participating in the competition, 10 made it to the final, six of which were Italians working in prestigious New York restaurants. Surprisingly, none of the Italians one any of the three prizes. The victory went to [Joshua](#)



[Pinsky](#) [5] of the [Momofuku Nishi](#) [6] restaurant, followed by Ed Schoenfeld of [RedFarm](#) [7], and Garrison Price of [The Buco Alimentari & Vineria](#) [8].

The Jury

Some of the big names on the judging panel included [Giuseppe di Martino](#) [9], the founder of Pasta di Martino and President of the Gragnano Consortium; Albert Sapere and Barbara Guerra, the founders of [Le Strade della Mozzarella](#) [10]; journalist [Luciano Pignataro](#) [11]; and [Mitchell Davis](#) [12], the Executive Vice President of the James Beard Foundation. Together they decided who was worthy of the special prize, one that celebrates Italian culture and gastronomy with an emphasis on pasta as a staple in traditional Mediterranean cuisine. Davis kicked the night off by expressing how food has evolved to such a remarkable state of quality, creativity, innovation, sophistication, and craft. He believes that the foundation “helps foster an appreciation of food and to help shape America’s food culture.”

The Winning Dish

Pinsky, chef of the celebrated Momofuku restaurant - created by Korean American chef David Chang, brought a successful plate to the table called “ceci e pepe”. The bucatini were cooked al dente and served with black pepper mixed with a chickpea paste called Hozon.

Coming in second place was the Red Farm owner, “Chino-New-American” cooking cult. Ed Schoenfeld enhanced an unusual Gragnano format called the rosemary pasta. A dish made of meat, vegetables, and soy sauce, which enriched the essence of Italian pasta with a Chinese American dish.

The third prize went to a dish consisting of the lamb with fresh herbs, plant leaves, and rich pecorino cheese.

The Importance of Pasta

Giuseppe di Martino reflected on the importance of pasta and how it is a global product. “There is a great Italian prestige in the production of pasta and it is something that carries people from around the world and this is a strength and the power of pasta so it’s a great pleasure for me to be here in New York where hundreds of different ethnic cultures have managed to live together peacefully while sharing good food and good company.” Adding that the jury would make their final decision “completely driven by flavor, appearance of the dish, and technique used.”

In conclusion, the future looks bright for the new Primo di New York champ. Last year’s winner, Massimo Sola, is the Michelin-Starred Executive Chef of [MAMO](#) [13] restaurant and has recently opened his own place in Soho called [Sola Pasta Bar](#) [14]. This Primo di New York reflected on the potential of non-Italian chefs who with creativity and cleverness managed to bring tasty dishes to the table that were full of international flavors and Italian heart.

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- [3] <https://www.jamesbeard.org/>
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- [5] <https://nishi.momofuku.com/team/josh-pinsky/>
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[9] <http://www.pastadimartino.com/pastificio/storia-eng.php>

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