

Mississauga's Heidi is Canada's best bartender

For 22-year-old Heidi Hirsch, bartending means more than just mixing drinks.

Hirsch is on her way to Lisbon, Portugal, to compete in Martini and Rossi's Grand Prix after winning the Canadian championship May 6 at Toronto's Hotel Intercontinental.

"You win (a competition) by style rather than experience," said Hirsch, a first-year student in Humber College's hotel and restaurant management program who lives in the Cawthra-Queen Elizabeth Way area.

"A bartender is an entertainer," she said. "You have to put on a good show."

Hirsch was one of three Humber students picked by instructor Andrew Buzas to compete in the national competition.

Competitors were judged by their ability to mix the drink, serve it courteously and practise good hospitality. They also had to take a written test that had questions about general liquor knowledge.

"It seemed like a harmless competition," said Hirsch. "If I didn't win, I at least would have learned enough to go back next year."

She said winning the competition was a surprise, but she didn't feel nervous when it came down to a tie-breaker with a student from George Brown College.

"Once I tied for first, a lot of the pressure was off," she explained. "I was so happy to be that close to winning, either way would have been fine."

Once she gets to the international competition, she'll also have to contend with an oral examination.

"They see how well you can carry on a conversation for anywhere from 15 minutes to half an hour," said Richard Dittmar, brand manager in Canada for Martini, who was himself a Canadian Grand Prix champion and competed internationally.

Hirsch is taking her own concoction to the competition. Not yet named, it's a combination of Martini Bitter, Martini Bianco, grapefruit juice and sparkling wine.

Hirsch will head for Europe in July, spending three days at Martini's headquarters in Turin, Italy, before going to Portugal for the competition. If she places in the top three, she'll win a three-week trip around the world.



Humber College student Heidi Hirsch showed the expertise that got her the Martini and Rossi Canadian Young Bartender Championship at a reception at the

college last Tuesday. Hirsch will be off to Portugal this summer to compete against representatives from 35 other countries

Photo by Carol Walthers

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