

□ **TOKYO (23 October 2009)** – Grand Hyatt Tokyo sous chef, Shigeo Hirai, has been crowned World Chocolate Master 2009 at the “Salon du Chocolat Professionnel” exhibition, known as the World Chocolate Masters, at Porte de Versailles in Paris, France.

The World Chocolate Masters is recognised as the world’s most important competition for chocolatiers and pastry chefs. Over a vigorous three-day battle, which occurred this year from 14 October to 16 October, 19 final contestants from all over the world created a complete range of chocolate items, including a chocolate showpiece with the theme “haute couture”, a moulded and a dipped praline, a chocolate pastry, a gastronomic chocolate dessert and a decorated “haute couture” hat. The jury was composed of 22 international leading chocolate professionals who carefully evaluated each contestant’s pieces and their creativity with chocolate. Apart from winning first prize, Chef Hirai also won the “International Press Award” and the “Best Chocolate Showpiece” award with his creation, “Baroque Romance,” a chocolate “sculpture” in the form of a mannequin posing for a photographer, designed to represent his understanding of baroque style in modern life.

“I am very honoured to have won such a renowned award,” said Chef Hirai. “The challenges began in the preliminary contest in Japan, and with the support I received, I was able to come this far to Paris. I hope to be a good role model for the younger staff of Grand Hyatt Tokyo, and with this award, I have certainly gained confidence to develop further as a patissiere.”

Chef Hirai joined the Grand Hyatt Tokyo’s pastry department in 2003 and currently works as sous chef, creating pastries and cakes for the Fiorentina Pastry Boutique at Grand Hyatt Tokyo and desserts for the hotel’s restaurants. Prior to joining Grand Hyatt Tokyo, Chef Hirai spent two years in France working and studying at such famous patisseries and restaurants as *Hotel de Warwick*, *Patisserie Stephane Secco*, *Boulangerie le Moulin de la Vierge* and *Boulangerie Phillippe Martin*. Chef Hirai is a 1995-graduate of Japan’s Tsuji Cooking Academy.

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