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Steamboat Springs pastry chef hoping ‘sweet’ culinary journey leads to spot on Team USA

Pastry chef Sarah Helzer hopes the next step in her culinary journey will come in September at a qualifier in Chicago that will be used to select the U.S. team competing in a prestigious international pastry competition.

“This past summer I competed in Charlotte at the National Pastry Conference,” said Helzer, who is an executive pastry chef at the Primrose Steamboat and Nomadic Table in Steamboat Springs. “I competed in that one, and I won that one. I think that lit the fire for me to start competing.”

She said she was also encouraged by the other chefs in the competition that saw her talents and suggested she do more. She won for best plated dessert for 2024 at the Charlotte event.

The win is a big reason she turned her attention to the qualifying process for [the Coupe du Monde de la Pâtisserie](#), which is also known as the Pastry World Cup. The biennial event will be held in 2027 in Lyon, France and will feature the best pastry chefs from around the world.

To get there Helzer will be asked to create and select a range of desserts under strict time constraints at the Sept. 6 national competition in Chicago during the Chicago Baking & Pastry Forum. The top performers then move on to the Americas Continental Selection in New Orleans in 2026. The top finishers at that event will earn an invitation to the main event in France

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“There’s three on the team, plus an alternate. Essentially, there’ll be a Sugar, a Chocolate and Tasting candidate,” said Helzer, who is one of two that have been invited to compete for the Tasting position.

Helzer said the Chocolate and Sugar candidates will make showpieces, and the Tasting Candidate will prepare and present a restaurant-style dessert and a buffet display dessert. Helzer said the Tasting Candidate will also handle the ice sculpture for the team.

The Steamboat Springs chef entered the culinary world at age 3 after falling in love with baking in her mother’s kitchen in Cleveland. After high school she was accepted to a culinary school in Chicago but decided to change course when she was offered a three-year apprenticeship at The Greenbrier Resort in West Virginia where she studied under Executive Pastry Chef Jean-François Suteau.

That was where she got a taste of culinary competition as her apprenticeship ended with a 10-hour pastry competition judged by chefs Nathaniel Reid, who has directed top pastry kitchens around the world, and Sylvain Leroy, an esteemed pastry professional with over 45 years of experience in the culinary pastry field.

Before coming to Steamboat Springs, she also worked at The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas, Fontainebleau in Miami Beach and Walt Disney World at the Swan and Dolphin hotels.

She arrived in Steamboat Springs in 2022 and is currently an executive pastry chef for both the Nomadic Table and Primrose.

“If I make it on the team, fingers crossed, that team will be practicing like once a month,” Helzer said. “We’ll be meeting and practicing for the next year-and-a-half or so. In the summer of 2026, there will be a competition in New Orleans where Team USA will compete with other North American and South American countries to be selected to go to the World Cup.”