

Nadine Norman-

Danes Barista Champion

BeanScene speaks with Nadine Norman, the 2011 Danes Grand Barista Champion, about manicures, rowing and her colourful world of coffee.

Ask Nadine Norman if she thought she'd ever be the 2011 Danes Grand Barista Champion, let alone have a career in the coffee industry, and she laughs at the idea.

Eighteen months ago Nadine started a career as a beautician. She has since left behind the days of manicures, waxing and tanning to enter a profession as a barista that has proved to be a fit that was "meant to be".

"I'm still a baby in the coffee industry," Nadine says. Hardly an amateur, however, at age 23 Nadine has already achieved what many baristas strive for: the coveted title of Danes Grand Barista Champion, bringing with it Australian and international recognition in the expanding coffee industry.

"It's crazy, I always played with the idea of [being a barista] but never thought of it as a career. Once I got the job it all rolled on from there," she says. "I'm absolutely hooked."

Inspired by a friend to enter the world of coffee, Nadine worked at Danes Wahroonga café in Sydney for nine months before training at Danes head office and starting full time work as a barista.

"I fell in love with it," she says. "I love the challenge of being a barista, that you have to produce something of good quality, a perfect cup of coffee every time. I love that it's always changing and I love the fact you're never going to stop learning. There are so many different parts that make up coffee and the industry and that's the best bit."

Competing alongside 20 other competitors, Nadine participated in the 2011 Danes Grand Barista Championship on 8 June at the Danes Coffee headquarters in Brookvale, Sydney.

Following two days of heats, the seven finalists competed ahead of five industry experts who judged for sensory and technical evaluation. The competition involves 15 minutes of preparation time for the baristas to set up their table and grinder

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settings. Ten minutes is then allocated for the baristas to produce four black coffees, four espressos, four white coffees, four coffees brewed by a different method and as many espresso lattes in eight ounce cups that they can make, with extra points for latte art. A penalty is incurred if competitors go over time.

For her extra brewing method, Nadine decided to use a siphon. To add to the pressure of the competition, Nadine notes that she watched a competitor's siphon go out in the heats and dreaded that moment should it ever happen to her. But it did. Nadine says the incident rattled her performance, but not her determination.

Apart from that minor altercation, Nadine says the finals were brilliant and went without a glitch. She kept the same routine all the way to the finals, only changing the type of beans she used.

Going into the competition, Nadine says she didn't have any expectations and never expected to win. "When they called out the results I knew I did well, but I didn't think I would win," she says. "It was a massive shock."

According to Nadine, the standout of her routine was the ristretto espresso, which she credits to her training through Danes. "Black coffee is a huge part of the competition," she says. "If you know you can make the coffee and get it in that time limit, it's a huge advantage."

For her final routine, Nadine used the Caribbean blend which she describes as having "really earthy, dark chocolate tones", so that when it's put through the milk, the flavours are enhanced with a bit of caramel coming through.

This winning combination not only impressed Nadine, but the judge's as well, who crowned her the 2011 Danes Grand





Barista Champion. “Winning has definitely given me more confidence, now I know where I can go in the industry,” she says.

Unfortunately, her involvement with Danes as an employee restricted her from competing in the Australasian Grand Barista Championships in Thailand that took place on 9 July. “There’s always that level of disappointment,” Nadine says. “But it was my first competition and it’s just the beginning. In fact, it’s better for future competitions because it drives you that little bit harder.”

Nadine attended the Thailand event as an Australian Ambassador for the championships. Runner up, Sesa Sestic from ONA coffee House in Canberra represented Australia at the international event, and successfully took home the title of Australasian Grand Barista Champion.

Nadine says her win attests to the importance of proper training and qualifications for all baristas and demonstrates the credibility and professionalism of Danes’ training course.

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success at such an early period in her career, Nadine is currently focused on training baristas at Danes and is interested in experimenting with her own roasting. Nadine says she loves her involvement in the training because she can see herself

in her students: “I started out in the same spot they’re starting in, and I worked my way up.”

Away from the world of coffee, Nadine finds the time to play hockey at home in the Central Coast in Empire Bay, and compete in rowing competitions Australia-wide.

“All the girls I row with are obsessed with coffee so every Sunday we have to have a catch-up in the morning with a coffee,” she says. “Even when I get home on Friday night, my little brother still asks me to make him a coffee, I can’t escape it.”

With a supportive network of friends and family, a loyal company behind her and a passion for what she does, this young barista is set for a successful career. Nadine has her eyes set on opening a café in the future and she already knows exactly where it will be.

“MacMasters Beach up on the New South Wales coast,” she says. “I’ve had the spot picked out since Year 10. It’s straight across from the beach and it’s been empty since I was 15. It’s still there, I just need about \$1 million to buy the location.”