

Kings of Pastry

a Film by

Chris Hegedus and D A Pennebaker

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CREDITS

Directed by

Chris Hegedus
D A Pennebaker

Executive Producers

Frazer Pennebaker for Pennebaker Hegedus Films
Nick Fraser for BBC
Barbara Truyen for VPRO

Produced by

Frazer Pennebaker
Flora Lazar

Associate Producers

Rebecca Lando
Patricia Soussloff

Camera and Sound by

Chris Hegedus
D A Pennebaker
Nick Doob

Edited by

Chris Hegedus
D A Pennebaker

Featuring

Sebastien Canonne, M.O.F.
Jacquy Pfeiffer
Rachel Beaudry
Philippe Rigollot
Stephane Glacier, M.O.F.
Regis Lazard
Frederique Lazard
Philippe Urraca, MOF

Musicians

Alex Toledano, Music Supervisor
Sebastien Giniaux
Guillaume Singer
Jeremie Arranger
Corentin Giniaux

Generous Support

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The Florence Gould Foundation
The Grand Marnier Foundation

DIRECTORS STATEMENT

People often ask why we would make a film about a French pastry competition but as soon as we met chef Jacquy Pfeiffer it became clear that the Meilleurs Ouvriers de France competition was not going to be your average Top Chef cook off. These reality TV shows seemed like mere wind sprints compared to the marathon three-day M.O.F. contest which he was preparing to enter. But winning is not all that this epic contest represents. Becoming a M.O.F. (Best Craftsman in France) is a lifelong dream for French artisans that can only come true by seeking excellence. As Jacquy would say, “The M.O.F is *not* about doing the ‘best that *you can do*’ but the ‘best that *can be done*.” This degree of perfection in the pastry profession, like most Olympic contests, is achieved through passion, sacrifice, and extraordinary skill -- and as we found out, for Jacquy and the other fifteen finalists, a lot of luck.

Our filmmaking has allowed us to witness many different worlds through the eyes of interesting and talented people many of whom have become friends. Chef Jacquy Pfeiffer is among them. What we found in the arcane creation of French pastry was a process based on ancient kitchen physics. Once you have learned the laws that apply perfection lies in the job of properly carrying them out. Most Americans hardly recognize the names of classic French pastries -- macarons, dacquoise, brioche -- some of the exquisite treats that Jacquy perfects daily. But what we did not expect was that Jacquy was more than a baker. He was an artist creating towering sugar sculptures, Brancusi style blown sugar figures, and large intricate Faberge eggs. Everyday we watched Jacquy push himself toward excellence and show students at his Chicago based French Pastry School what the M.O.F is all about.

Fifteen extraordinary finalists competed with Jacquy in Lyon each pursuing their dream to wear the tri-color collar of a M.O.F and to enter this brotherhood of pastry elite. Many other renowned chefs lent their expertise as judges, tasters and helpers. Watching the camaraderie between the chefs was inspirational and at times of crisis especially moving to witness. We are extremely grateful to the M.O.F. organization for letting us be the first to film this fascinating world.

D A Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus

KINGS OF PASTRY

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Imagine a scene never before witnessed: Sixteen French pastry chefs gathered in Lyon for three intense days of mixing, piping and sculpting everything from delicate chocolates to six-foot sugar sculptures in hopes of being declared by President Nicolas Sarkozy one of the best. This is the prestigious Meilleurs Ouvriers de France competition (Best Craftsmen in France). The blue, white and red striped collar worn on the jackets of the winners is more than the ultimate recognition for every pastry chef – it is a dream and an obsession. The finalists, France’s culinary elite, risk their reputations as well as sacrifice family and finances in pursuit of this lifelong distinction of excellence. Similar to the Olympics, the three-day contest takes place every four years and it requires that the chefs not only have extraordinary skill and nerves of steel, but also a lot of luck.

Filmmakers D A Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus secured exclusive access to shoot this epic, never-before-filmed test of France’s finest artisans. The film follows chef Jacquy Pfeiffer, co-founder of Chicago’s French Pastry School, as he journeys back to his childhood home of Alsace to practice for the contest. Two other finalists are profiled in the film -- chef Regis Lazard, who was competing for the second time (he dropped his sugar sculpture the first time), and chef Philippe Rigollot, from Maison Pic, France’s only three-star restaurant owned by a woman. During the grueling final competition, chefs work under constant scrutiny by master judges and the critical palates of some of the world’s most renowned chefs evaluate their elaborate pastries. Finally, these pastry marathoners racing the clock must hand carry all their creations including their fragile sugar sculptures through a series of rooms to a final buffet area without shattering them. The film captures the high-stakes drama of the competition – passion, sacrifice, disappointment, and joy – in the quest to become one of the KINGS OF PASTRY.

KINGS OF PASTRY

LONG SYNOPSIS

Award winning filmmakers, D A Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus, (*Dont Look Back*, *The War Room*) take us behind-the-scenes with exclusive first time access to France's oldest and most prestigious pastry competition -- the Meilleurs Ouvriers de France -- an epic three-day test of passion, perseverance, artistry, and technical skill. The blue, white and red striped collar worn on the jackets of the winners is more than the ultimate recognition for every pastry chef -- it is a dream and an obsession. Similar to the Olympics, the contest takes place every four years and requires that the chefs not only have extraordinary talent and nerves of steel but also a lot of luck.

Director Chris Hegedus grew up with pastry in her genes. Like most of the chefs in *Kings of Pastry*, her grandfather apprenticed at 16 with a baker in Europe. He immigrated to New York City and in the 1920s he opened two, elegant confectionary 'tea rooms' where he created his signature chocolates and ice creams. Her great-grandfather was chef for one of New York City's most famous German restaurants and cooked for the Roosevelt family during the summers at their home on Campobello Island. On the other side of the family was Chris's Hungarian grandmother, whose reputation for delicious cooking and baking was famous throughout her Eastern European community in Bethlehem, Pa. "When other kids in the 1950s were eating Betty Crocker birthday cakes mixed from a box I would be sent a ten-layer hazelnut "Dobos Torte" sponge cake with a caramel filling, mocha buttercream icing and a burnt-sugar glaze. Every year we would count how many layers Grammy would make for the cake. She lived until she was 94 so we felt blessed!"

So when Hegedus and Pennebaker were looking for their next project, the subject of *Kings of Pastry* seemed zen. They heard about the Meilleurs de France competition when their friend, Flora Lazar, decided to jettison a prestigious career in public service and enter Chicago's highly regarded French Pastry School to pursue her dream of becoming a French pastry chef. After graduating, Flora told the filmmakers that her teacher, chef Jacquy Pfeiffer, an award-winning French chef from Alsace and one of the founders of the school, was competing in the legendary M.O.F. competition. She thought it would make an interesting story for an article. "It sounds like it would make a terrific documentary," replied director, Chris Hegedus. "It had a lot of the personal drama that we look for in our films," added Pennebaker. Like *The War Room*, it was a buddy story: Jacquy's coach for the competition was Sebastien Canonne, who had started the

school with him. Sebastien won the competition several years earlier and wore the coveted blue, white and red collar that told the world he was a M.O.F -- a member of France's culinary elite. So the stakes were high for Jacquy, both personally and professionally.

Filming began at the French Pastry School in Chicago where Jacquy was preparing for the competition. Each M.O. F. competition has a different theme - this year's was marriage - and Jacquy was hard at work designing a complex raspberry caramel, vanilla mousse, hazelnut wedding cake, shaped like a half dome, that he hoped would impress the judges with its originality. Every competing chef would have to design and construct a complete buffet presentation suitable for a wedding, using only edible materials to make fragile sugar sculptures that would tower elegantly above the cakes and pastries. Jacquy figured his buffet might require as many as forty different recipes.

“One of the perks of making a pastry film is that you get to sample,” admitted Pennebaker. “But we realized right off that these elaborate pastries were delicacies that we had rarely encountered.” Watching Jacquy work a huge ball of sugar and blow it into a Brancusi figurine like an expert glass artist, it became clear that there was more required for this contest than imaginative baking. The filmmakers knew then that they needed to follow Jacquy back to his childhood home in Alsace where he planned to continue practice for the competition. Raw materials for baking, flour, butter, sugar, would all be different in France and he would have to master that difference before the contest. The filmmakers convinced Flora, who spoke French and had worked in public affairs, to be their field producer. Frazer Pennebaker, their longtime partner, would executive and co-produce the project from New York. It would require the blessing of the Meilleurs Ouvriers de France, an organization about which they knew very little. “Unfortunately, nearly everyone in France goes on vacation in August and getting hold of the head of the M.O.F. proved difficult” noted Frazer, “but real life stories don't wait for financing and approval so we decided to take a chance and just begin filming. Months later with the competition looming in Lyon, Flora's French and her determination, aided by a few friends among the M.O.F judges, got us in at the very last minute.”

Jacquy and his daughter Alex shared a suburban home with his girlfriend, Rachel, and her two daughters. Rachel understood how important the M.O.F. was for Jacquy and especially how stressful -- her nightly ritual was to wake Jacquy from nightmares about the competition and assure him that the whole thing had been called off so he could go back to sleep untroubled. But

Jacquy was also concerned about leaving his family behind for six weeks while he practiced in France. He left Chicago and the pastry school determined but with a heavy heart.

The filmmakers catch up with Jacquy in a storybook Alsatian village where he and his assistant Kurt are working in a make-shift kitchen over the bakery of Pierre Zimmerman, a childhood friend, himself a world champion in bread baking. For weeks, Jacquy creates and tests recipes using local ingredients. But pressures mount and when forced to redefine his vision for both his sugar sculpture and the wedding cake, he finds himself falling behind schedule. With the deadline approaching Sebastien hurries to France to supervise a three-day time trial for Jacquy and see if some of the complexity of the planned recipes could be reduced to save time. The trial shows them that Jacquy has a lot of changes to make before the competition that awaits him in Lyon only a week away.

In France the film also follows French chefs Regis Lazard and Philippe Rigollot, two other finalists preparing for the competition. Regis works at a patisserie in nearby Luxembourg and is being coached by the pastry chef for French President Nicolas Sarkozy. This is the second time Regis has competed for the M.O.F. The first time he lost his balance climbing the stairs leading to the buffet area and dropped his sugar sculpture. The memory of this disaster still haunts Regis as he prepares to try once more for the prized collar. For all the finalists, the strain of the contest, both financially and personally, is enormous. Regis' wife explains, "When we built this house, before building the bedrooms and kitchen, we built this special kitchen in the basement for him to practice for the M.O.F. It was his dream so I let him do it again, but if he doesn't get it this time, that's it."

Philippe Rigollot is the pastry chef at the renowned Maison Pic, the only three-star restaurant in France owned by a woman. Growing up in the bakery where his mother worked, it has been Philippe's lifelong dream to wear the tri-color collar of the M.O.F. chefs. His wife, a chocolatier, also works at Maison Pic. She helps her husband prepare for the competition along with two other coaches, each highly regarded M.O.F's.

Jacquy, Regis and Philippe are three of sixteen finalists chosen from seventy French pastry chefs who competed in the grueling two-day semi-final process earlier that year. For the final competition they traveled to Lyon, long considered the country's culinary capital, where Paul Bocuse, father of contemporary French cuisine, has his elegant restaurant. During the next three

days of mixing, piping, and sculpting, the finalists create an astounding array of products for their required buffets, including a tiered wedding cake, delicate cream puffs and chocolates, tea pastries and jams, a restaurant-style plated dessert, a chocolate sculpture and a sugar sculpture. In addition to this, each chef brings a “bijou” – a small sugar sculpture specially designed for this event and presented in a glass box like a museum piece. As if all this were not enough, after the first day of the competition, they are given a surprise, a special dessert to be created in addition to all their other items. The finalists, pastry marathoners racing the clock, must work spotlessly and with amazing sang-froid as they produce confections of exquisite taste and beauty working under constant scrutiny by master judges who weigh their products (rigid weight requirements apply), inspect their equipment and aprons (fingerprints are not permitted), and even examine their trash (no discarding of surplus). Their final pastries are then judged by the critical palates of some of the most famous chefs in their field and each final spectacular buffet is evaluated for artistic presentation.

The Meilleurs Ouvriers de France, created nearly a century ago to help preserve the quality of French artisan trades and to affirm the importance of manual work in a society that has historically prized intellectuals, is known throughout France as the official mark of the country’s most accomplished artisans. The pastry competition - each artisan trade has its own - is regarded as one of the most rigorous of the M.O.F. contests and the few laureates chosen at the end will join the ranks of their celebrated M.O.F brethren, proudly wearing the blue, white and red collar. In awarding its laureates presidential recognition as well as academic diplomas, the M.O.F recognizes those whose artistry, and technique ensure that the French artisan trades, pastry arguably France’s defining artisan trade, adapt continuously and remain a vibrant force in French life.

At the Elysee Palace five of the sixteen competing pastry chefs received the Meilleurs Ouvriers de France award from President Nicolas Sarkozy. For Jacquy, Regis and Philippe, the passion, sacrifice, disappointment, and joy epitomize the high stakes quest to become one of the KINGS OF PASTRY.

SELECTED CAST BIOS

JACQUY PFEIFFER

Co-founder of The French Pastry School in Chicago, Jacquy Pfeiffer got his start in pastry at the age of 15, as an apprentice at Jean Clauss' Pastry Shop in Strasbourg, France. In the course of his career, Pfeiffer has served as the pastry chef for Admiral Phillippe Le Jeune of the French Navy, the Royal Family of Saudi Arabia, and the Sultan of Brunei, and prepared pastries and desserts for celebrities like Michael Jordan, Michael Jackson, and Oprah Winfrey. An internationally award-winning pastry chef and the recipient of the 2004 World Pastry Forum's Pastry Chef of the Year, Pfeiffer is the honorary co-chair of [For the Love of Chocolate](#) and [Pastry Chicago](#).

SÉBASTIEN CANONNE

Sebastien Canonne began his career in 1983 at the age of 15 when he studied at the Ecole Hôtelière de Rouen in Normandy, France. Known for his brilliance with texture and taste, Canonne has worked at the famous La Côte St. Jacques Restaurant in Burgundy alongside Michelin three-star chef Michel Lorain; at the legendary Beau-Rivage Palace in Geneva, Switzerland; at the Hotel Palace Eulerin Basel; and for French President Francois Mitterand at le Palais de l'Elysee in Paris, under Master Chef Joel Normand, M.O.F. Co-founder of the French Pastry School, Canonne is honorary co-chair of [For the Love of Chocolate](#) and [Pastry Chicago](#).

REGIS LAZARD

Régis Lazard comes from a family of artisans. He is the grandson of a baker, son of a restaurateur, brother of a baker, and sister of a restaurateur. But it was from vacations in the kitchen of his uncle, a pastry chef, that he developed his passion for pastry. Early in his career, Régis worked with Franck Fresson, one of the profession's elder statesmen who inculcated in him a sense of rigor and the pursuit of perfection. He has worked for more than a decade at the Luxembourg patisserie of Gerard Cayotte, who first encouraged him to test his mettle in pastry competitions. After competing in the World Chocolate Masters and the Trophy Pascal Caffet, Régis made his first attempt at the M.O.F. Like many who do not succeed in their first attempt, Régis made a second attempt in the competition captured by Kings of Pastry.

PHILIPPE RIGOLLOT

Philippe Rigollot has served for almost a decade as the pastry chef at the celebrated Maison Pic, the only Michelin 3-Star restaurant presided over by a woman. A member of the 2005 gold-medal French team in the World Cup of Pastry, Rigollot attributes his early interest in pastry to the time he spent after school at the pastry shop where his mother worked. He received his formal training at Lenôtre, the training ground for many of France's most esteemed pastry chefs. At Lenôtre – founded by the recently deceased Gaston Lenôtre, widely considered the father of modern French pastry – Rigollot oversaw production for the firm's entremets before moving on to second one of the métier's great masters, Gérard Gautheron, M.O.F. at Lenôtre's equally legendary school. Rigollot later worked at the Pré Catelan in Paris, where his desserts were almost as famous as the cuisine of this 3-star restaurant.

FILMMAKER BIOS

CHRIS HEGEDUS – Director, Camera, Editor

Chris Hegedus has been making films as a director, cinematographer, and editor for over 30 years, recording some of the best-known personalities of our times. She received the 2001 DGA Award for Outstanding Directorial Achievement for *Startup.com*. With her husband and partner D A Pennebaker, she directed *The War Room*, a behind-the-scenes look at Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign that received an Academy Award® nomination and won the National Board of Review's D.W. Griffith Award for Best Documentary. Hegedus has received the Golden Eagle CINE award and lifetime achievement awards from several organizations, including the International Documentary Association. In 2006, she theatrically released, *AI Franken: God Spoke*.

Hegedus first collaborated with Pennebaker as editor of *Town Bloody Hall*, about the infamous 1971 debate on feminism moderated by Norman Mailer. Subsequent collaborations include the 1977 television series *The Energy War; DeLorean*, following auto entrepreneur John DeLorean; *Rockaby*, written by Samuel Beckett for their project starring Billie Whitelaw; and the acclaimed 1998 feature *Moon Over Broadway*, which chronicled Carol Burnett's tumultuous return to Broadway theater.

Hegedus and Pennebaker have devoted much of their creative energies to short and feature-length films about music. Before MTV, they filmed Randy Newman's song "Baltimore," helping establish the music video format. Their music documentary features include *Depeche Mode 101; Down From the Mountain*, a companion concert film to the Coen Brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*; and the soul musical tribute *Only The Strong Survive*. Other music-related films include *Branford Marsalis: The Music Tells You; Open Hand*, chronicling Suzanne Vega's concert tour; the 1994 series *Woodstock Diary*; and *Searching for Jimi Hendrix*. Their HBO special, *Elaine Stritch at Liberty*, won a 2004 Primetime Emmy™ Award for Best Music, Comedy or Variety Show. Other recent credits include *Assume the Position* with Robert Wuhl for HBO; and a segment for the highly regarded HBO special *Addiction*.

Recently, Hegedus and Pennebaker have made a number of political films for Sundance Channel. 2008's *The Return of the War Room*, which met up with the original cast of *The War Room* to discuss the changes in America's political landscape over the interceding 15 years. *Vote for Change* chronicled the concert tour of Bruce Springsteen and others organized by MoveOn.org. Also for Sundance, Hegedus directed *The First Amendment Project: Fox vs. Franken*.

D A PENNEBAKER - Director/Editor/Camera & Sound

D A (Donn Alan) Pennebaker is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of cinéma vérité filmmaking. In the early sixties, Pennebaker and his colleague Richard Leacock developed one of the first fully portable 16mm synchronized camera and sound recording systems, which revolutionized filmmaking and introduced the immediate style of shooting so popular today. Pennebaker's many professional honors include the IFP's Gotham Award.

Pennebaker first film was the 1953 short *Daybreak Express*. In 1959, he joined Drew Associates, which produced for Time-Life the celebrated "Living Camera" series in the early 1960s. The

subjects ranged from Jane Fonda's Broadway debut, *Jane*, to Kennedy's 1960 Wisconsin Democratic primary, *Primary*, to the desegregation of the University of Alabama, *Crisis*.

In 1967, Pennebaker released the seminal classic *Don't Look Back*, which followed Bob Dylan's last acoustic concert tour in England. He continued to capture the musical moment in subsequent films, including the influential *Monterey Pop*, *Keep On Rockin'* and *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*. 1970 brought *Company – The Original Cast Album*, about the recording of the Stephen Sondheim musical's cast album.

In 1976, Pennebaker began his collaboration with his partner and future wife, Chris Hegedus, co-directing such acclaimed films as 1998's *Moon Over Broadway* and 1993's *The War Room*, which received an Academy Award® nomination and won the National Board of Review's D.W. Griffith Award for Best Documentary. The team's early films include the three-part special *The Energy War; Town Bloody Hall*, and *DeLorean*. Their many films about the performing arts and popular music include *Rockaby; Elliott Carter at Buffalo; Depeche Mode 101; Searching For Jimi Hendrix; Down From The Mountain; Only The Strong Survive*; and the HBO special *Elaine Stritch at Liberty*, winner of the 2004 Emmy Award™ for Best Music, Comedy or Variety Show. Other recent credits include *Vote for Change*, for Sundance Channel; *Assume the Position* with Robert Wuhl for HBO; and *The Return of the War Room* for Sundance Channel. and a segment for the highly regarded HBO special *Addiction*.

Pennebaker was executive producer for *Startup.com* and *Al Franken: God Spoke*, both directed by Hegedus.

FRAZER PENNEBAKER – Executive Producer, Producer

Frazer Pennebaker joined Pennebaker Hegedus Films in 1980, and served as assistant producer on *DeLorean*. He has produced and executive produced all of Pennebaker and Hegedus' theatrical and television films since 1983, beginning with *Dance Black America* for PBS. His feature productions include the Academy Award-nominated *The War Room; Moon Over Broadway*, about Carol Burnett's return to Broadway; and the music feature documentary *Depeche Mode 101*. He also co-produced *Down From the Mountain; Only the Strong Survive*, the award-winning *Startup.com*, and *Al Franken: God Spoke*. In addition to his roles as producer and executive producer Pennebaker oversees all film distribution and sales for Pennebaker Hegedus Films.

Television productions include *Elaine Stritch at Liberty*, winner of the 2004 Emmy™ Award for Best Music, Comedy or Variety show. Other television credits include *The Return of the War Room, Vote For Change* and *The First Amendment Project: Fox vs. Franken* for Sundance Channel; and, for HBO, "Assume the Position" with Robert Wuhl, and a segment of *Addiction*. He has also produced a number of music videos, and longform music films including *Jimi Plays Monterey; Shake with Otis; Suzanne Vega: Open Hand; Branford Marsalis: The Music Tells You; Woodstock Diary; Searching For Jimi Hendrix; Bessie*; and *Sessions From West 54th Street*.

FLORA LAZAR - Producer

Flora Lazar writes about food for the Huffington Post and owns [Flora Confections](#), a Chicago-based artisan chocolate company. She is a graduate of the French Pastry School of Chicago and has interviewed pastry chefs throughout France for a companion history she is writing on the Meilleurs Ouvriers de France competition. Before entering the pastry arts, Flora, who earned her B.A. from Harvard and her Ph.D. from Columbia University, spent nearly two decades in academia and educational advocacy. Most recently, she launched and directed the public affairs unit at Chapin Hall Center for Children, one of the world's most renowned centers of public policy research on children. She co-founded the National Service Learning Partnership, a national advocacy supporting community service in schools and was the founding co-director of Operation Respect, an educational and advocacy organization addressing the issue of school violence. Flora is a long-time volunteer at Chicago's Green City Market, one of the country's largest farmers markets focused on sustainable agriculture.

REBECCA LANDO – Associate Producer

A graduate of NYU's illustrious Maurice Kanbar Institute of Film & Television at the Tisch School of the Arts, Rebecca Lando is the associate producer at Pennebaker Hegedus Films. She is also the writer/producer of [Working Class Foodies](#), a webseries devoted to local and seasonal cooking on a working-class budget.

PATRICIA SOUSSLOFF - Associate Producer

A former corporate lawyer, Patricia Soussloff provides legal representation to low-income children in special education. She is also planning a New York City charter school that will include children with high functioning autism or Asperger's Syndrome. Her involvement in **Kings of Pastry** was inspired by her interest in French language and culture.