Venezianoâ€™s Craig Simon wins Australia Barista Championship, 2012

Paves the way for world domination in Vienna in early June.

Craig Simon finally did it. With his fourth attempt at the Australian Barista Championship, 2012 has proven to be his year. He will head to Vienna in early June to contend for the World Barista Championship. I am very excited to represent Veneziano Coffee Roasters and Australia in Vienna in a few weeks, says a proud yet humble Craig. The judges clearly agreed hes the man for the job, he scored 60 points higher than previous champion and this years runner-up Will Priestly, and he has the admiration and support from his fellow competitors and peers. It was a long journey that began almost two years ago, when Craig selected coffee sourced from the farm Finca El Manzano owned by Emilio Lopez of Cuatro M Single Origin Coffee. Craig competed using that coffee at the Victorian barista competition in 2010 and has used it ever since. Emilio happened to see the Australian 2011 performance being streamed on the Internet and this prompted him to contact Craig directly, extending an invitation to visit the farm. Craig came fourth in the national finals last year and soon after flew out to El Salvador to meet Emilio and see the coffee harvest.Since then the pair have developed a strong rapport and speak regularly over the phone, with Craig revisiting Emilio in El Salvador in February this year, after he won the Victorian Barista Championship. Whilst there, he cupped 90 coffees per day over five days and selected his coffees for the national competition.After trying all those coffees, I kept coming back to my two favourites; it was this particular 100% red bourbon varietal that really impressed me, one processed natural and one washed. Both coffees were picked on the same day and processed together, says Craig.I really wanted the judges to experience the differences in the processing and I set out to highlight the characteristics I had experienced at the cupping table.Craig asked the judges to look for tart red cherry notes from the pulp natural coffee and a bittersweet dark chocolate from the washed processed coffee. In his signature drink, he pressed actual red bourbon coffee cherries hed picked from the same trees his coffee was sourced from. This was added it to a red Morello cherry reduction hed prepared the night before with some of the cascara (dried skin and fruit of the coffee cherry) obtained during the washing process. His boss, Craig Dickson of Veneziano Coffee Roasters, intends for Craig to stay focused on practice for the world competition. We want to ensure that we have the best shot at the world title; its time, says Dickson. Australias last win was in 2003 with Paul Bassett, in Boston, USA.The AustralAsian Specialty Coffee Associations (AASCA) coffee competitions were held over the weekend under the auspices of the Melbourne International Coffee Expo (MICE), Australias first exhibition dedicated solely to coffee. Dickson, who initiated MICE, says I think weve proven Australias capability of running a world-class coffee event and we hope to host a world coffee event on our turf in 2013.Veneziano Coffee -specialtyroasters, supporter of direct trade and with producers and cooperatives, onsite world class barista training school, First Pour cafs, espresso bars and coffee showrooms, home of Australian barista and latte art champions, recipient of countless awards and proud supplier to over 500 of Australias best cafes. Roasteries located: 22 Bond Street Abbotsford, VIC, 369 Montague Road, West End, QLD and 111 Melbourne Road, Adelaide.

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