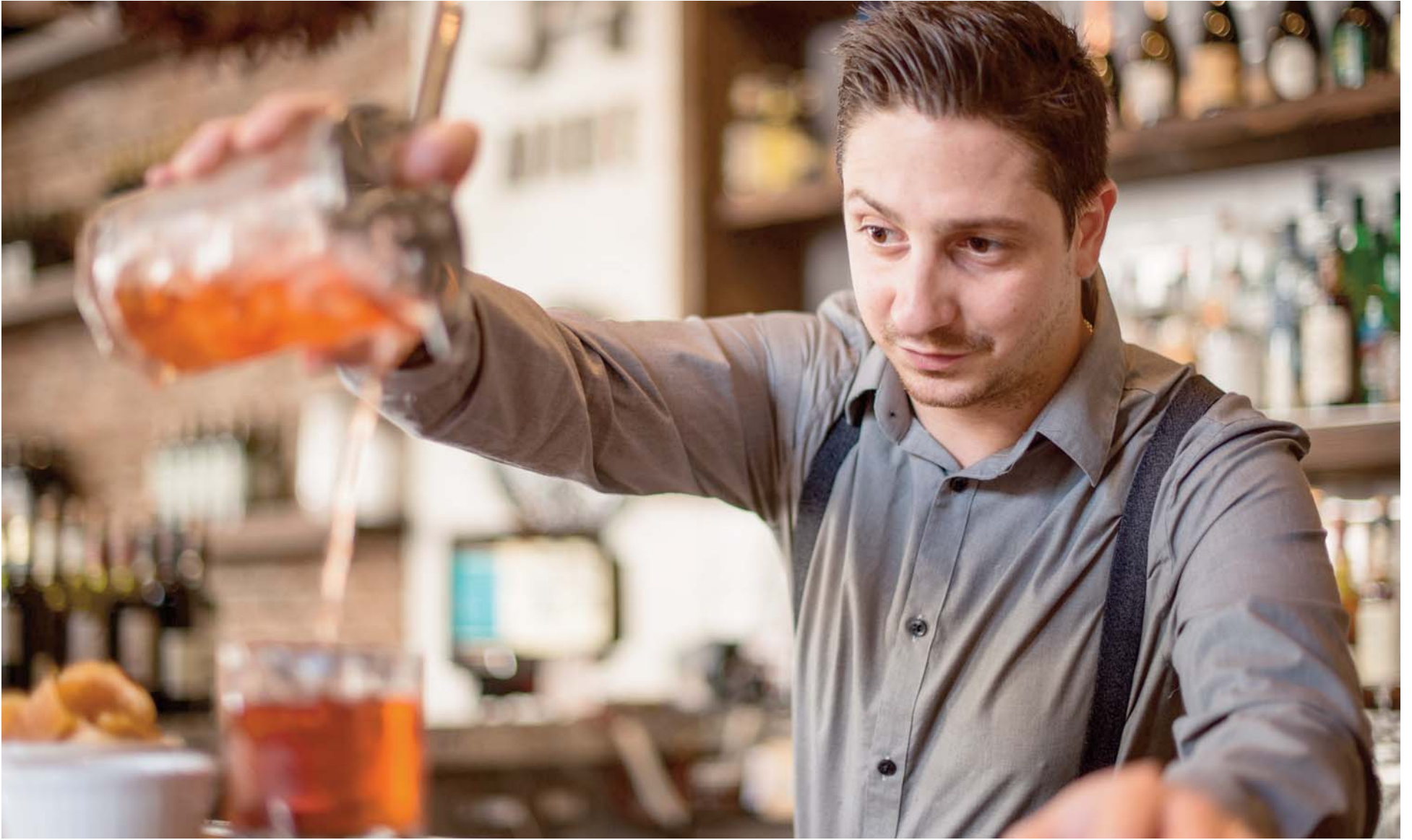


SAN FRANCISCO

ITALIAN COMMUNITY



Jacopo Rosito. Photo credit: Lavinia Pisani

Jacopo Rosito: Italian Champion 2015

LAVINIA PISANI

After three months of online competitions, Italian bartender Jacopo Rosito, 28, received the highest score among his Italian colleagues and was recently selected as one of the 20 world finalists that will fly to Amsterdam to shake spirits, and create new flavors with the goal of becoming the final winner of the Bols Around The World (BATW) 2015 Bartending Championship.

Originally from Florence, Rosito currently lives in San Francisco crafting and delivering fine Italian cocktails behind the full bar of 54Mint, an Italian restaurant located in the heart of the South of Market district (SoMa), on 16 Mint Plaza.

"54Mint has been a bet for me," says Rosito.

Owner of the restaurant Gianluca Legrottaglie and Chef Mattia Marcelli are originally from Rome and they want to stay loyal to their origins, Rosito says.

In fact, they were interested in bringing the Italian drinking culture of "Aperitivo" to downtown San Francisco, giving this way Rosito the chance to become a propagator, serving for example the classic Florentine cocktail "Negroni" with complimentary homemade chips, salty almonds, and white lupin beans every day from 4-6 p.m. for \$8.

Before landing in San Francisco in 2013 to stretch his

horizons and be inspired by the American cocktail culture, Rosito was the head bartender of Four Season's Florence.

Lavinia Pisani: What is the biggest difference between bartending in Italy and in the U.S.?

Jacopo Rosito: San Francisco has a drinking culture that Italy doesn't have yet. Italy is improving [in this sense], bartenders are fantastic and we have nothing to envy, but cocktails are not appreciated as much as here. In San Francisco people get off work and go have a drink as a way to relax while exploring new flavors, spirits, and ingredients that are unique. In Italy there is the "aperitivo" culture, which is different. Italians often drink the same thing over again, while tasting bites. They see this, as a time to socialize before going to dinner, or just hang out with friends [...] Bartenders in Italy have more of a classic imprint, in America some have become mixologists or artists who create drinks using particular products, bitters, and spirits that are going to finalize researched cocktails. This is possible in America also thanks to the variety of products and ingredients exported by other cultures such as the Chinese, that brought interesting tea and spices, or the Mexican, with tequilas, plants, and roots. This kind of selection can only be found in big countries.

LP: How did you end up participating at BATW and what did you take out from the

experience?

JR: I was in Florence the beginning of this year and I wanted to challenge myself by participating in an important worldwide competition. After a few months Bols Around The World would have started and so I decided to give it a try. The experience enhanced me especially on a personal level, as it gave me the opportunity to con-

JR: The 12 challenges were set out to defy all elements of bartending: humor, knowledge, skill, personality and creativity. I enjoyed all of them, but two in particular were the ones I appreciated the most: designing a tiki mug, and garnishing a cocktail, because also aesthetic wants its part. These were also the most challenging for me. I am not a good drawer and I don't have

outside of the flute-shaped-glass, finished with an inside touch of silver pearls placed on the button of the cocktail.

LP: What's your number one role in crafting cocktails?

JR: Paying attention to details.

LA: What is the signature cocktail you are serving now?

JR: The drink I am about to launch at 54 Mint, thanks to the BATW competition, is a "Smokey Old Fashion." It's made with Gin Jenever instead of Bourbon Whisky. Super-bartenders like Jerry Thomas [the father of American mixology] used to use this gin. Also, instead of using regular sugar, I use sugar syrup infused with smoked Chinese tea. As a final touch drops of scotch will be dropped over the rim of the glass, garnished with a smoky cinnamon stick and orange peel and served on an ice-ball to slow down the dilution of the drink.

LP: What's next?

JR: Win Bols Around the World. The specific dates will be released in August. I am absolutely happy to participate and as of today, I feel it's right to dream and I will do my best to score as high as I can in the September 2015 final.

Rosito adds how great all other Italian participants have been and that it was also a pleasure to see that second place was given to a woman: Emilia Bobac from Padova. Last year's Bols Bartending World Champion was Kate Gerwin from the United States.



Jacopo Rosito. Photo credit: Lavinia Pisani

nect with bartenders from around the world, share opinions and observe different approaches used by bartenders in Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

LP: What was the hardest BATW challenge for you to pass?

much inventive. However, I designed a tiki mug representing a bartender of the prohibition period with suspenders and mustache, and I garnished a cocktail using plants and orchids found in my home garden, which I placed later as creeper on the