



For immediate release

Winner announced at Costa Coffee's MENA Regional Final of the International Barista of the Year 2008 Competition

Carlos Martinez from UAE crowned Costa Coffee MENA Regional Champion Barista 2008

The roasting heat of competition was fierce and the passion for coffee almost tangible during two days of closely contested competition of Costa Coffee's MENA Regional Final of their International Barista of the Year 2008 competition. This annual event was this year held at the Courtyard Marriott, The Green Community, Dubai on 19th and 20th August and was supported by Bon Cafe, Porcelain International, Dream Uniform, Monin Syrup and Kerrys.

Given the success of last year's winner Gihan Weerasinghe, who went on to win the International Finals in London, the Barista of the Year competition is now a hotly anticipated event on the Costa calendar and this year's winner, Carlos Martinez was selected from 10 competing current Country Champion baristas from Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and the UAE.

The winning barista demonstrated both their coffee making skills and knowledge of the coffee making process over two days before a panel of select judges including Roisin Caush, Costa's Regional Core Skills and Brand Standards Manager.

Anita Cox, Regional Marketing Manager (MENA) for Costa Coffee commented, "At Costa Coffee, we pride ourselves on our commitment to excellence and on the quality of service that our baristas provide for our customers."

"In Carlos we have a worthy champion who will now represent the MENA Region at the International Barista of the Year 2008 competition to be held at the end of October at the Costa Roastery in Lambeth, London. The eventual winner of that competition will then represent Costa Coffee as a whole at the annual World Barista Championships 2009 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA."

“This competition is formal recognition of the hard work and talent of all our baristas working in our stores. It also demonstrates Costa’s continued obsession with providing a truly excellent coffee experience. Costa is a truly global brand and the winner of the International Barista of the Year 2008 could be any one from over 1000 stores in 23 countries.”

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Notes to the Editor:

COSTA COFFEE

- Costa Coffee is one of the top five coffee chains in the world. It is the UK’s fastest growing retail brand, and the country’s largest and most successful coffee shop business.
- Costa is also expanding at pace internationally – at present the company has more than 1000 stores across 23 countries.
- Overall, Costa Coffee is growing at the rate of five stores a week worldwide, and the company was named International Franchise Operator of the Year by global magazine Retail Leisure in June 2007.
- Costa has full control of its coffee from bean to cup. The smooth, distinctive flavour is produced by slow-roasting carefully-selected coffee beans the Italian way at the company’s roastery in Lambeth, London originally set up by its Italian founders Sergio and Bruno Costa.
- Costa invests heavily in training. Baristas are coached in the art of coffee-making at the company’s own purpose-built training academies in the UK and around the world.
- Costa Coffee is owned by **Whitbread PLC**, the UK’s leading hospitality company, whose portfolio also includes market-leading brands such as Premier Travel Inn, Brewers Fayre, and Beefeater. Founded in 1742, the company is listed on the London Stock Exchange and is a member of the FTSE4Good indices. Whitbread was named in the Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World list, which was launched during the World Economic Forum in 2005.
- Whitbread’s strategy is to create value for shareholders by focusing investment and growing in expanding sectors of the hospitality industry, primarily in the UK but also in selected overseas markets. Premier Travel Inn opened in Dubai in spring 2008 through a joint venture with Emirates Group, and has entered into a 50:50 joint venture agreement with leading real estate company Emaar-MGF to develop over 80 hotels in India over the next 10 years. All these hotels will have a Costa coffee shop.