

# The new age on its way

By Franco Cesare Puglisi

A heart-to-heart with Silvia Federica Boldetti, a young talent on the international pastry scene. Along with the ingredients of her success, we receive an exclusive interpretation on life (and not just her professional one)!



journey, you encounter forks in the road, and once you have chosen one direction, you have absolutely no idea how the other direction could have been.

**During your career, which developed rapidly, which moments would you consider the most significant?**  
My first day in Cast Alimenti, and the following six months: possibly some of the most difficult moments of my life. Moments like when you don't even know where to turn in a world that doesn't belong to you, and you look at yourself with scorn because you come from quite the contrary. If you don't possess the total will power to confront it, giving up is an easy choice. Needless to say, that thought didn't cross my mind,



Silvia Federica Boldetti is known today as one of the most prepared and qualified female pastry chefs in the world, especially after earning the title of Pastry Queen 2016. How much has your professional life changed after this prestigious international achievement?

Wow, I don't see myself in this claim, or rather, I feel like it would be showing off just one of the steps in my professional journey, which, as far as I'm concerned, while it was an important achievement, it is part of the past. I would say that, for me, the year spent preparing for it was more important than the title. True growth happens there, not in lifting a trophy.

I don't know how much has changed, I could say nothing or maybe even everything, simply because I have no idea how my career would be without it. Along a





Silvia Federica Boldetti awarded Pastry Queen in 2016

and it was one of the best years of my life.

There I met Stefano Laghi, and meeting him is possibly another one of those occurrences that changed my life, thanks to everything he has given me at a professional level as well as to everything he continues to give me on personal level as a friend, nearly a brother. And, what else, my entrance into AMPI (Accademia Maestri Pasticceri Italiani - The Master Italy Pastry Chef Academy), which rightfully must be mentioned. I see it is a new starting point where I compare myself with people that have much more experience than I do.

Having had the possibility to collaborate in a few projects and jobs with people like Iginio Massari or Gianluca Fusto, whom I consider mentors in my professional life and who were there for me when I needed them, was another significant factor in my career development.

Meeting Livia Chiriotti was another important moment. She gave me free rein to write and to contribute to the

Italian pastry arts magazine "Pasticceria Internazionale". This year, I began my collaboration with the company Callebaut. I have pretty much always been freelance, so for me, having such a point of reference, I think, can signal a new turning point for my career.

Before pastry arts, however, I think that my professional figure, even today, was greatly shaped by my studies, starting from the scientific high school to my two degrees. Possibly not due to the "skills" I learned, but for the way of thinking and the dialectical communication. And then, it's an important aspect of every day: the energy and passion that I dedicate to what I do, the new ideas, the projects that never stop.

Is it a particular feeling to have succeeded at entering the "Accademia Maestri Pasticcieri Italiani", as the first (and for a long time, only) woman?

I am no longer the only woman because this year Debora Massari entered the "Accademia". But no, for me, there is no difference to be or to not be a woman. I think that the job does not have a gender, and I am far from a fan of driven feminism, in that I want to stress that I believe that being a woman in a man's world only highlights differences that I don't see. I can hold a spatula just like any other man, and I can pull sugar just like any other man. I am a pastry chef, and just as the word "Chef" isn't any different whether you are referring to a female or to a male, neither do I believe that there should be any differences in real life. However, if someone twice the size of me wants to lift a 20-kg sack of flour for me, then that will be an appreciated gesture, but if there isn't anyone to offer, I can handle it myself just like the other six thousand female pastry chefs that I know work 18-hour days in kitchens all over Italy.

Yes, entering AMPI has value, just like it does for the other 70 members.

Which obstacles did you have to overcome in a predominantly male world, often biased as well as full of falseness, jealousy and envy?

Malice can often be more female than male, but it is not limited to any specific gender. Frankly, I always



considered this “challenge” fun, and I have found myself getting along in collaboration with men in a professional environment. Obviously, gossip is always going around, and malice too, and insinuations are always easy especially if a woman isn’t afraid of her own femininity. But, as one person once told me, a person that I greatly esteem professionally, “As long as you know how to demonstrate that what the rumours insinuate is wrong, simply by being yourself and show-

ing your professional value in the day-to-day life, then whoever is talking will only be wasting their breath and energy that they could use improving their own life instead of unsuccessfully trying to ruin yours”. It was worded more or less like this, and it remains one of my favourite mantras.

What is the first advice you would give to a young woman who is approaching the pastry world?





First woman admitted in AMPI

To be herself, to not expect different treatment or to look for short-cuts, to not even want them. You need to study, to work your way up the ladder. You cannot want to start at riches, but you must choose the rags. You need to follow your own dreams just as anyone else would. You need to continue to climb without feeling like you arrived. Don't ever see yourself above somebody else, nor less capable than anyone else. You need to recognize your own limits, and try to surpass them while respecting others. You should always compete with yourself and with no one but yourself, without jealousy or envy, without belittling others to make yourself feel big. You need to aim for the action and not just the talk. Don't try to be anyone but yourself and especially don't try to be someone that someone else wants you to be. We become important when we are important to ourselves and when we succeed in bringing our uniqueness to the surface. Not everyone is going to like it, but that won't be our

problem. Remember that each moment passes, the good ones and the bad ones, and often, we have to fall before we can reach any higher. Because you can go anywhere, step by step, one step at a time.

In your career and in your life, there are lots of other aspects, including books, TV appearances and a strong social media presence. Having mastered these tools with competence and determination has made you a popular personality. How much has this affected your personal and your private life? What have you had to give up?

Possibly a lot. What I definitely had to give up is a certain stability that, at times, I miss, even though I know that I could possibly feel trapped in a routine. The truth is I still don't know where my place in the world is, but I think each moment has its timing and everything arrives in the moment when we need to go down that road. I have probably given up the possibility to sleep



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in my own bed each night, but I have done so much more and eventually there will be time when I can go home entering the same door every night. I think that thanks to my personality I am not destined to have a tranquil life, but that isn't what I would want either. It would kill me.

Social media... a person very important to me at one point told me "learn to keep your personal life private." I take it out of context and analyse that phrase to reflect. The truth is, I do just that: the world sees what I want them to see. Family and potential boyfriends, for example, are never mentioned. What I do is communicate emotions and feelings, which can mean something different for each person depending on their context or their point of view. Who knows me well knows what I am referring to; for the rest, they are sensations that I link to everything that I do. I don't know how to disconnect myself from my work, and I have no intention of doing so. Because I once said, I am not a pastry chef, nor a writer, nor a woman, daughter, traveller. I am, and always have been, just Silvia. The rest is just a variation of me, and people have learned to appreciate the fact that I am a real, authentic person. Others may find this extremely annoying.

#### **What are your plans for the future?**

To be so happy that it's sickening, no matter what it takes. Maybe it will be with the pastry arts, maybe not. Maybe it will be with writing, or maybe both, or possibly with a family, with a baby in one arm and a surf-

board in another. I have no idea. I have promised myself to search happiness no matter what the cost. For now, what I am doing makes me happy, but if one day the situation were to change, even if I would be scared, I would have the courage to turn my life upside down and start a new story from the beginning. Otherwise, I'd be throwing my life away.

#### **What is the best quality of Silvia Federica Boldetti? and what is her biggest shortcoming?**

Maybe they are the same thing. I don't know how to keep my mouth shut. I don't know how to keep my emotions to myself and to not say what I am thinking or to not "let out" what I am feeling. It is as if I explode, as if I need someone to open the release valve to let everything out and communicate it with the world, to be transparent. I think that "wearing masks" is the biggest problem in our world and of our times, a problem that has grown thanks to the ease of hiding behind a screen. Almost nobody is who they really are. And that's where disasters are created.

This has another side of the coin: it has consequences. Not everyone is willing to

hear what they don't want to hear. Often, with the rush to say everything and to say it immediately, I don't know how to wait for the natural development of things, like the time that the caterpillar needs to transform into a butterfly, a time where they have to be still. No matter what, if we want to, we can learn from anything. It only and always depends on us. And this, I am trying to learn.

