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## Features

# Hurrah for hors d'oeuvres! Newbie judges pick their favorite tidbits

By **Valerie Foster**  
Features Editor

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Carolyn and Jerry Anderson have a unique way of thanking the clients of their real estate business, Anderson Associates of Greenwich.

Annually, they host a "best of" tasting under a huge tent on the grounds of their backcountry Greenwich estate and invite 200 or so new and old friends who act as food critics for the night. On a recent Friday, with the hint of fall in the air, these newly appointed judges sat around large round tables, sipping glasses of wine and eagerly awaiting the first of 20 hors d'oeuvres - provided by 10 of our area's top caterers - that would be nibbled, dissected, discussed and finally judged.

\*

Behind the scenes

This is the third time the Andersons have held this event. They started with pizza, judged truffles and vanilla ice cream last year, and decided to tackle hors d'oeuvres this night. Each caterer was asked to provide one hot and one cold nibble that would be dropped off before guests arrived. The caterers were not allowed to stay because this was a blind tasting.

Kitchen duties were led by Patricia Donnelly and her crew of 10, who made sure each hors d'oeuvre arrived before the judges as each caterer specified. In some cases, that meant heating the food. Others required assembling.

"They were really wonderful," Carolyn Anderson says of the kitchen crew. "They knew how important it was to get each hors d'oeuvre to us, handled properly, and delivered as the caterer would."

\*

Under the tent

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### Photos



[Above, Jean Hacker, of Greenwich, . . .](#) (Kathleen O'Rourke/Staff photo)  
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[Jerry and Carolyn Anderson greet guests as they arrive . . .](#) (Kathleen O'Rourke/Staff photo)  
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[Left, Mildred Holko of Greenwich, . . .](#) (Kathleen O'Rourke/Staff photo)  
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"The caterers agonized over what to provide," Jerry Anderson tells the crowd. "After all, how many tuna tartars do you want to taste? Many changed their selection, some of them many times. Some caterers specified their hot hors d'oeuvres be served at room temperature. Others wanted their cold hors d'oeuvres served at room temperature."

And we judges thought our job difficult?

We are told to rate on a scale of five, and Jerry Anderson suggests we just make believe we are at a party and hors d'oeuvres are being passed. A three means we would like to have the hors d'oeuvre again. If you are eating it only because you are very hungry, that would be a two. A one? You never want to lay eyes on that particular food again.

If you taste a hors d'oeuvre and then go searching for the server to get a second bite, that's a four. You would march into the kitchen for a five.

And one last rule: Use the erasers at the end of the pencils. We can all change our minds.

\*

The main event

First up: Coconut Batter Shrimp with Apricot Horseradish Dipping Sauce, followed by Crab, Lime & Ginger Salad in Crispy Phyllo Cups.

As we place numbers next to each hors d'oeuvre, many judges wish they were at that party Jerry Anderson talked about, where all you have to do is eat and drink. To think: We were sympathizing with the caterers. Judging really is hard work.

The hors d'oeuvres keep arriving -- Seedless Grapes Rolled in Stilton Cheese and Dusted with Crushed Pistachios, Mini Maryland Crab Cakes with Lime Cilantro Tartar Sauce, Vanilla Lobster Salad on Cucumber Shoots, Tuna Sashimi on Sesame Flats -- and the night grows more serious, with more erasing and less comparing notes.


The judges are maturing, becoming more critical, acting like -- well -- like judges.

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