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Taste of the town: Andersons ask guests for their top culinary picks

By Kristan Zimmer, assistant editor

As guests arrived at the Anderson estate in backcountry Greenwich a row of valet parking attendants in white jackets and black bow ties stood at attention. The Andersons' house was open, literally, to let company and the warm summer air in and the smell of tasty treats out as the party began and caterers prepared the main attraction.

It was the third annual Anderson Associates tasting event. This year's theme was hors d'oeuvres. Last year guests determined their favorite ice cream and the first year, the town's best pizza was chosen. Ms. Anderson said the tradition started when the Andersons wanted to have a party to honor the very best clients of their real estate firm, which serves Greenwich and Stamford.

As cocktails were served Friday, guests, which included Carolyn and Jerry Anderson's relatives, friends, employees and many clients meandered through yellow and white gardens and sipped wine as they got acquainted with their fellow judges.

"The good thing about the judges is you'll find the youngest age is 15 and the oldest is 93 so you have all different styles of people of all ages," Ms. Anderson said.

When the hour arrived, Mr. Anderson called his guests to find their seats under the big white tent decorated with white and yellow linens and hydrangea centerpieces. They anticipated about 180 guests.

The menu included 10 hot hors d'oeuvres and 10 cold ones from 10 different caterers. Guests were asked to score each one on a scale of one to five. They were given a list of caterers and a list of hors d'oeuvres. The candidates:



Mark Dean and Ana Franco try the coconut batter shrimp at the third annual Anderson Associates tasting event. The winner will be published in the company's guide to Greenwich. — Kristan Zimmer photo

- Aux Delices on East Putnam Avenue
- Food Design on Field Point Road
- Fjord Catering on River Road
- Garelick & Herbs on West Putnam Avenue
- Gourmet Galley on Bruce Park Avenue
- Le Potager on Woodbury Avenue
- LexZee Gourmet on Sound Beach Avenue
- Libby Cooke on Boulder Avenue
- Plum Pure Foods on East Putnam Avenue
- Watsons on Pemberwick Road

Guests found the coconut shrimp didn't have enough shrimp and too much coconut. The seedless grapes in stilton cheese dusted with crusted pistachios went over with much success with some guests but others found it too bitter. One table thoroughly enjoyed the artichoke, aioli, capers and prosciutto puffs on baby artichokes. Sushi lovers enjoyed the tuna sashimi on sesame flats but others steered clear because it wasn't cooked. While some hors d'oeuvres intended to be served hot came out room temperature, others, intended to be cold, came out a bit warm for some palates. One table unanimously agreed the prosciutto and parmesan stuffed mushrooms, which came out hot, even at the end of the evening when the air became chilled, were quite good. That dish was the winner — it had the most points totaling 567. Many guests found the hot coffee and tea and their warm pashminas comforting towards the end of the evening, too.

As the results were handed in and the caterers were matched up with their dishes, guests exited feeling full and satisfied after an evening of socializing.

"It's a great event," said Barbara Jansen. "It's fun and interesting."

"You get to taste new things and you can try to do it at home," said Greg Jansen. His wife, Barbara, said many of the dishes were things she would normally never have the chance to try. Jean Hacker said she loved the Maryland crabcakes, which left a delightful taste in her mouth. The dish came in with the second highest number of points. She also enjoyed the sweet potato pancakes but said they were too sweet to be served so early in the evening. She liked the opportunity to try different caterers because she said there is always a party at her house.

"My house is a merry-go-round house, constantly filled," she said.

Tom and Gale Hatch said they thought it was a great idea for a party.

"When you're going to do a party, now you have this whole list," Ms. Hatch said, of caterers to choose.

At their table, favorite hors d'oeuvre was the sweet potato pancakes dolloped with crème fraiche and apple chutney.

Bunny Lukas, also at the Hatchers' table, said she attended the first two tastings also. She was a client of Anderson Associates.

"This is really a fun idea for a get together," she said.

In the end the top caterer turned out to be Aux Delices, which served the crab lime and ginger salad in crispy phyllo cups and a peking duck in scallion pancakes. Plum Pure Foods, which served a hoisin barbecued duck flatbread with scallions, ginger, lemongrass and cilantro; and a steak au poivre crostini with Madagascar peppercorns, caramelized onions and Bernaise aioli came in a close second. Libby

Cook, which served a prosciutto wrapped mission fig with gorgonzola cheese and fresh thyme; and rosemary sun dried tomato parmesan croustade with chevre cheese, came in third — just a few points behind.

A complete list of the results will be e-mailed later this week to all who attended. The winner will be published in the Andersons' "Guide to Enjoying Greenwich."

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[Top of Page](#)

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