

# CONFETTI

(It's All in the Details)



## Blind Date

**A Vancouver-based caterer breaks out the blindfolds for a true taste of its culinary creations at a unique "blackout dinner."**

**Take away** a person's sense of sight, and all other senses are immediately heightened. This was exactly the effect that Vancouver, British Columbia-based Culinary Capers was going for when it created its "Dinner in the Dark" dining event for Tourism Vancouver's annual Dine Out Vancouver. Held inside the catering company's commercial kitchen, the event offered 60 guests the opportunity to eat a multi-course meal blindfolded—their senses of smell, taste and touch their only culinary cues.

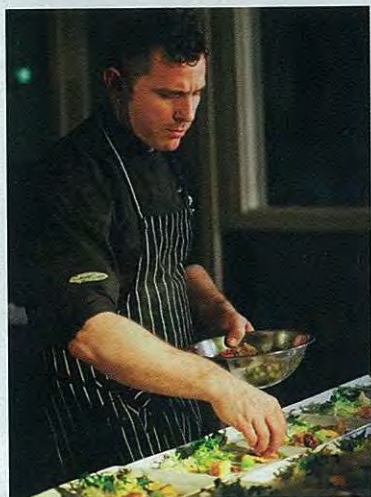
After a brief wine and hors d'oeuvre reception in the catering company's lobby, guests were

escorted to the kitchen and seated at three long tables of 20. Tabletop decor, which was kept to a minimum so as not to compete with the food aromas, offered moss green silk linen and simple centerpieces of fresh vegetables and herb bundles. Each place setting featured a black satin blindfold, large cloth napkins to protect clothing, and stemless wineglasses to avoid spills. Guests were instructed that their server would touch their shoulder when they were about to be served, and to raise their hand if they wanted to be escorted to the restroom. At the beginning of each course, executive chef Margaret



**Guessing game:** Guests at the "blackout" dinner from Culinary Capers rely on their senses of smell, taste and even hearing to enjoy the meal (top). Servers offer help, including a gentle warning against eating the paper of a fish baked in parchment (above).

Photos by John C. Watson



**Safe at the plate:** Stemless wineglasses save on spills and vegetables stand in for floral decor, which could have provided confusing scents to the blindfolded guests (above); the Culinary Capers team enjoys the chance to serve guests in the company's commercial kitchen (left).

the salad course featured crisp, dehydrated raspberries, goat cheese orbs and compressed, concentrated cucumber, among other delicacies. A parchment bundle of Moroccan-spiced sable fish was dramatically sliced open by servers for an intense, aromatic experience.

After guests finished six courses, the kitchen lights came on and the blindfolds came off. A slideshow presentation co-hosted by Chisholm and owner Debra Lykkemark featured a breakdown of each dish, and encouraged guests to guess at ingredients and discuss preparation techniques. "There were some very sophisticated palates present," Felicella says. "Many of the guests were able to accurately identify ingredients in the complex dishes."

So much for eating with your eyes first! —**Susan Cuadrado**

### Culinary Capers Catering

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Chisholm introduced each plate with a cryptic description, giving a few hints, tips and alerts on hot items and serving utensils.

"Our goal for the menu was to create an eclectic journey of courses that highlighted regional and sustainable ingredients," says marketing director Carla Felicella. "We wanted the dishes to maximize the heightening of the senses that occurs with lack of sight." To that end, modern cooking technique—such as molecular gastronomy, sous-vide and à la minute deep frying—were employed to give unexpected textures and intense flavors to some of the dishes. For example,

**Mea culpa:** Our September-October 2011 issue should have credited event design and production company EVOKE ([www.evokedc.com](http://www.evokedc.com)) of Silver Spring, Md., as the creator of the "doughnut wall" featured in "Food for Fêtes." Kate Headley Photography shot the image.

## PARTY FAVOR



## BRANCHING OUT

Hand-forged wrought iron candelabra reminiscent of bundled tree branches add a rustic-chic element to tabletops and buffets—without breaking the floral budget. Created and distributed by Atlanta-based Under Stella's Umbrella, the candelabra, which come in 33- and 48-inch heights, are designed to work with or without floral. "A little decor goes a long way with these," says creator, owner and former florist Stella Martin, who recommends tying just a small bouquet or tussie mussie to an arm or two, draping Spanish moss over the arms, or placing an oasis ball in the center for a cascading arrangement. "The candelabras work especially well under a tent because they help fill the air space," she says. "They pierce the sky, adding drama and light above the guests' heads without obstructing the view across the table." The candelabra, which cost \$135 and \$165, can be purchased through the company's website under its Garden Party line. **For more information, visit [www.understellasumbrella.com](http://www.understellasumbrella.com).**