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FOOD FOR FETES: SMART STARTERS

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WHETHER they're designed to whet guests' appetites or make up the entire menu, eye-catching, mouth-watering hors d'oeuvre pack a culinary punch. From miniature plated portions to stylish shooters, caterers dish up the latest hors d'oeuvre trends.

PETITE PLATES

Small plates are big news for hors d'oeuvre at special events.

"We are serving more small plates at events," says Debra Lykkemark, president of Vancouver, British Columbia-based Culinary Capers Catering, noting that small plates are "great for portion control, presentation control and flavor control." A sample menu of the company's small-plate hors d'oeuvre includes twice-baked porcini mushroom soufflés topped with truffle foam, garnished with savory biscotti and served in espresso cups; roast duck with currant jam on a yam-and-potato pavé; and lamb chop lollipops with porcini mushroom risotto and grilled asparagus. "It's a great concept for clients who are into a gourmet experience, or clients looking for menus for stand-up receptions that will replace dinner," Lykkemark says.

At Oakland, Calif.-based Barbara Llewellyn Catering & Event Planning, "We are moving in the direction of 'smaller small plates' or 'tiny tapas,'" notes president Barbara Llewellyn. Her company serves small salad portions of classic Greek salad or radicchio salad with Gorgonzola cheese, spiced walnuts, Asian pear and lemon vinaigrette using chic-but-disposable small cups and plates imported from France. The caterer also offers a small-plate trio of tuna tartare, tuna niçoise and Moroccan tuna. "These can be served on smaller plates as a walk-around hors d'oeuvre," Llewellyn says. "The salads, coupled with our tuna selections and traditional beef tenderloin, are great alternatives for carb-conscious guests."



RESOURCES

Barbara Llewellyn Catering & Event Planning, 510/832-1967