

# BEST HORS D'OEUVRE

Dungeness Crab Congee



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Dungeness Crab Congee, Trendsetter Gala

## SYNOPSIS

The Dungeness Crab Congee, submitted for Best Hors d'oeuvre, triggered both nostalgia and curiosity as it was passed at a 250-person gala. Served in a Styrofoam cup labeled, Cup O' Congee: Dungeness Crab, guests were welcomed to accept this hors d'oeuvre with two hands. The creamy congee was traditionally prepared and topped with decadent Dungeness crab meat and crunchy Japanese chili garlic, noir rice crackers and toasted sesame seeds. Knowing most of the crowd would be less familiar with rice congee than the college-dorm staple of a Nissin's Cup Noodle, this hors d'oeuvre intrigued and delighted guests.



## CONCEPT

The concept of this hors d'oeuvre was to conjure memories and fascination as guests enjoyed a mini version of a known quick-serve dish... with a twist. The gala was comprised of guests 25-50 years old, most of whom were born and raised in Southern California. We knew a considerable portion of these guests would be a stranger to congee but would recognize the iconic Nissin noodle cup as an old friend. Congee is favorite dish amongst our company, and we conceived the idea of creating a familiar presentation to welcome guests to explore the unfamiliar. We used a comfort food reference to ease the uncomfortable. Guests giggled at playful presentation, and quite literally, ate it up.



## ORIGINALITY + PRODUCTION

Typically served plated, we transformed the Dungeness Crab Congee into a playful hors d'oeuvre with a sophisticated flavor profile. This hors d'oeuvre blended culture lines in both presentation and taste. Guests were taken on a journey through their younger years, as well as to another unfamiliar world. The Dungeness Crab Congee created conversation between guests. Guests shared stories from childhood, giggled at the cup design, and discussed the origins and preparation of congee. The well-balanced hors d'oeuvre bonded guests over the unexpected. The rice congee was boiled and prepared at our corporate commissary prior to arrival at the event. This base was brought back up to temperature onsite and ladled into the Styrofoam cups. Each cup received 1oz of Dungeness crab meat and was then topped with scallions, nori rice crackers, Japanese crunchy chili and toasted sesame seeds. To ensure the crunch of the nori crackers, cups were assembled on demand at the event and served five or fewer per tray.

## CHALLENGES + OBSTACLES

The biggest challenge was in the design and production of the custom Styrofoam cup. We needed the cup to look authentic and print directly on the cup opposed to an added label. We wanted guest's first glance to see only an adorable, miniature, version of the recognizable vessel, but with closer inspection, to see the customization in the description of the hors d'oeuvre. We too wished to play with the cultural norm to refer to Cup Noodle as Cup O' Noodle and chose to include the "O" that the collective continually adds to the original's name. Partnering with a graphic designer and seasoned printer, we were able to create a replica cup, printing directly on the Styrofoam.



## RECIPE

### Mini Dungeness Crab Congee, Crunchy Chili Garlic, Scallions, Fried Shallots, Fresh Ginger

#### Rice Congee

3 qt Dashi Stock

¾ cup Cal-Rose sushi rice, rinsed till water runs clear

One inch knob of peeled ginger

3 tbs white soy sauce

*Put the rice in a pot with the dashi stock, ginger, soy sauce and bring to boil. Give the rice a good stir, scraping the bottom of the pan to prevent sticking, then lower the heat and half-cover the pan. Simmer gently for 1 1/2 to 2 hours, stirring every 15 minutes, until the grains have burst open and you have a thick congee. Keep an eye on the pot to make sure the rice doesn't stick to the bottom. Toward the end of cooking, when the stock has become integrated with the rice and is the consistency of oatmeal, season lightly with salt to taste.*

#### Assembly

2 oz. rice congee

1 tsp. scallions, chiffonade

1 tsp. nori rice cracker

1 tsp. Japanese Crunchy chili garlic

¼ tsp. toasted sesame seeds

1 oz Dungeness crab meat dressed with brown butter and fresh lime juice.



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