

DO YOU SEATING

TRUE (SHRIMP AND) GRITS



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Aside from shrimp and grits, our editorial director enjoys the classic food combinations of peanut butter and chocolate, spinach and artichokes, and goat cheese and anything.

Shrimp and grits. Were there ever three words that sounded more deliciously Southern?

I'm one of five judges at this Saturday's first-ever **Shrimp and Grits**

Throwdown at The

Carolina Inn. (Was there ever a more perfectly Southern place to host a Shrimp and Grits Throwdown?) I would like to take this opportunity to act all cool about it, but, in truth, I've been talking this up for weeks. I may have even invited

my mom and sister from out of state.

I'll get to sample the Lowcountry creations of seven competing chefs – **Jeremy Blankenship** of **Tyler's Restaurant and Taproom**, **Trey Cleveland** of **Top of the Hill**, **Adam Cobb** of **Glasshalfull**, **Bret Jennings** of **Elaine's on Franklin**, **Vimala Rajendran** of **Vimala's Curryblossom Cafe**, **Jimmy Reale** of **The Carolina Inn's own Carolina Crossroads Restaurant and Bar** and **Adam Rose** of **Il Palio** at **The Siena Hotel**. So what am I looking for? I want to be surprised, which is why I'm especially excited that the tastings will be blind. That just makes things much more fun. In the words of Simon Cowell, I want them to make the dish "their own." You know, not go "too karaoke"

with it. The only rule is that the competing chefs must use shrimp and grits. After that, they are free to experiment. I've watched enough episodes (OK, fine, every episode) of *Top Chef* to know that this might mean we'll see some

capers or anchovies or something in a dish – or maybe even some crazy foam courtesy of molecular gastronomy. But at a classic spot like **The Carolina Inn**, timeless tradition may also reign supreme. (I think I might really have a knack for the talking-out-of-both-

sides-of-the-mouth thing required to be a judge.)

The 225 people in attendance will also have a say: A Fan Favorite Award will be announced along with the judges' choice. The event will raise money for **TABLE**, a local nonprofit that focuses on relieving childhood hunger. In a sense, we'll all be winners that day. But – based on what I know about the high standards of Chapel Hill's food scene – these chefs will take this very seriously. There may be good-natured smack talk; there may even be some pandering to the crowd. All I know is there will be plenty of shrimp and grits. I'm already picking out which stretchy dress I will wear that day. Hey, the chefs aren't the only ones who have to come prepared. **TW**

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