



Horseshoe Nails Brigade



Blind Tasting Guidelines

In **blind tasting** at food competitions like the MatanzaFest, judges typically take around **1 to 3 bites** per dish to assess the key aspects like flavor, tenderness, and overall quality.

Here's what they typically evaluate:

1. **First Bite:** Judges focus on the immediate impact of flavor and texture.
2. **Second Bite:** Allows for a deeper assessment of complexity, balance, and aftertaste.
3. **Third Bite (optional):** Sometimes, judges take a third bite if they need more clarity or to confirm certain aspects of the dish.

General Guideline:

- **1 bite:** For a quick, overall assessment (used when time is limited or there are many dishes to judge).
- **2 to 3 bites:** Standard in most competitions, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation without overwhelming the judges or requiring too much food.

For the **MatanzaFest**, a **2-bite approach** should allow each judge to get a well-rounded taste of each dish, ensuring a fair assessment while keeping the tasting process efficient.

For a judge to take **2 bites** of a dish during blind tasting, it typically takes about **1 to 2 minutes per dish**. This time frame includes:

1. **Evaluating the appearance:** ~15-30 seconds to visually assess the dish.
2. **First bite:** ~15-20 seconds for tasting, focusing on immediate aroma, flavor, texture, and mouthfeel.
3. **Second bite:** ~15-20 seconds for a more detailed assessment of balance, aftertaste, and consistency.
4. **Brief scoring/notes:** ~30 seconds for the judge to record their scores or make notes.

Total Time Per Dish:

- **1 to 2 minutes** is a reasonable estimate per dish, depending on how quickly the judges eat and score but this should allow judges to have enough time to fairly assess each entry.



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The MatanzaFest judging process is thorough to ensure each team gets fair and proper evaluation. Here's a general breakdown of the judging process and how long it should take for judges to evaluate each team.

When food is judged in competitions, especially in culinary contests such as BBQ, cooking competitions, or food festivals, there are several key elements that are typically assessed. Here are the most common factors:

- **Taste (45 Points)**
 - Flavor Profile: The dish should have a well-balanced flavor profile, with harmonious seasoning and the natural flavors of the pork shining through.
 - Depth of Flavor: Judges will look for complexity in the dish's flavor, where each ingredient contributes to a rich, satisfying taste experience.
 - Consistency: The flavor should be consistent throughout the dish, with no overpowering or underwhelming elements.
- **Texture (20 Points)**
 - Pork Tenderness: The pork should be cooked to perfection, with a tender and juicy texture that melts in the mouth.
 - Mouthfeel: The dish should have a pleasing mouthfeel, with appropriate textures that complement each other, such as crispness, softness, etc. where applicable.
 - Balance of Textures: Judges will evaluate how well the different textures work together, ensuring that no element is too dry, tough, or overly soft.
- **Creativity (20 Points)**
 - Innovation: Judges will look for innovative use of ingredients and cooking techniques that push the boundaries while respecting the Matanza tradition.
 - Originality: Dishes that offer a fresh take on traditional recipes or introduce new flavor combinations will score higher in this category.
 - Execution: Creative ideas must be well-executed, with a focus on delivering a dish that is not only unique but also delicious and well-prepared.
- **Aroma (15 Points)**
 - Smell: How appealing and aromatic the dish is. Aroma plays a large role in enhancing the flavor experience.
 - Balance of Fragrance: Ensuring that no one scent overpowers others.

These criteria help judges assess the overall success of the dish and whether it achieves a balance between aesthetic appeal, technical execution, and flavor quality.

Each competition might weigh these elements differently depending on its focus, such as BBQ competitions placing more emphasis on tenderness and taste, or fine dining competitions focusing on creativity and presentation.



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Blind Judging:

- **Duration per team: 2 to 3 minutes.**
 - In blind judging, the judges are not interacting with the teams, so they focus solely on the aroma, appearance, flavor, and tenderness of the food. This process moves quicker because it is focused on tasting.

Overall Judging Timeline:

- The judging is deliberate and careful, so the entire process will take about 45 minutes per category. There is only one round of judging.