

Clinton, Obama shared caterer

Owner of Blue Marlin provided everything from soup to nuts

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Hillary insists on jalapenos.

Barack wants Orbit gum.

Who knew?

Columbia restaurateur Bill Dukes did.

The owner of trendy Vista dining spot Blue Marlin said he was a common dominator between the warring candidates — catering meals on their flights during the S.C. Democratic primary campaign this month.

And it was GOP hopeful Mike Huckabee who inspired Dukes to get aboard those Democratic planes.

Let's explain: About three weeks ago, Dukes said Huckabee's folks asked for some meals to take on a plane before the former Arkansas governor flew to other campaign events.

This got Dukes thinking: When the Democratic contenders arrive for their primary a week later, they're going to have palate fatigue after attending so many pancake breakfasts in New Hampshire.

So he offered a taste of Southern cooking for the campaigns when they jetted into and out of the Palmetto State.

Dukes said he finished the S.C. primary catering seven flights for U.S. Sens. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

Dukes even trucked an order up to Greenville to meet the Clinton jet before the former first lady took off for a quick jaunt to an event in New York.

Menus included shrimp, crab cakes, collards and barbecue, as well as boiled peanuts picked up from Columbia's Cromer's.

But the campaigns also had special non-menu requests, some of which required special trips to stores, Dukes said.

Orders sent to Clinton always needed a thermos of chicken noodle soup and a side of sliced jalapeno peppers.

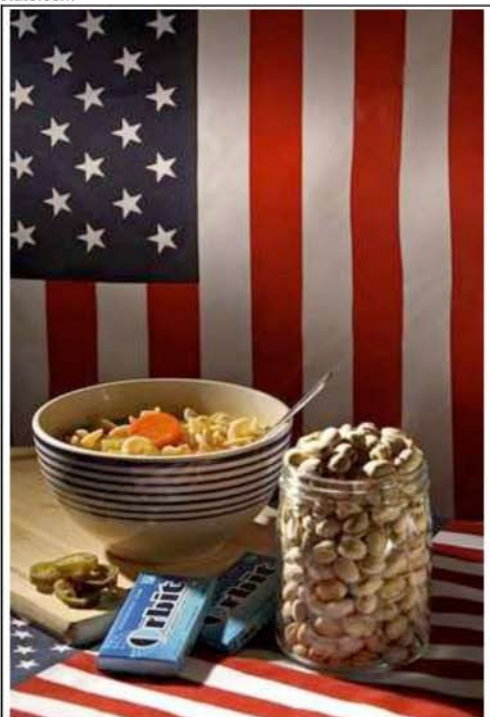
Orders for Obama always included pistachio nuts and a pack of Orbit gum.

It's unclear why the pistachios, chicken soup and the rest were must-haves. Attempts to get comments from their campaigns were unsuccessful this week.

The unusual requests from the White House wannabes come as little surprise to experienced caterers, who have to handle all sorts of demands from clients.

"You have to be able to ... fly by the seat of your pants," said Ed Chinnors, president of the American Culinary Federation Midlands Chapter.

For Dukes, the experience has given him an idea — catering meals for charter flights and private jets at Columbia's airports.



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Democratic candidates, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama have favorite foods. Clinton has a thing for jalapenos and chicken noodle soup. Obama likes pistachios and Orbit gum. Bill Dukes, owner of Blue Marlin in the Vista catered to the presidential hopefuls while they visited the state capital.