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History of Dîner en Blanc Locations in NYC 2011 to Present

08/23/2016 at 11:00 am by Michelle Young



On September 15th, the 6th annual New York City Dîner en Blanc will be back in a yet-to-be-disclosed location. The first round of registrations began yesterday, which are open to guests who attended last year and the second phase, guests of sponsored guests from the first phase, will open on Friday. After that, the tens of thousands on the waitlist might get to sign up if the dinner doesn't fill up before then.

Here at Untapped Cities, we've had a long history with this pop-up white dinner – from our attendance annually in the Paris Dîner en Blanc, the original incarnation of the dinner, to our role in organizing the dinner in New York City since its inception.

While we can't share any secrets of the upcoming dinner, we thought it would be a great moment to look back at the previous locations and speculate about where it might be this year. Let's go back in time first to the year 2011, when the Dîner en Blanc first launched in New York City:

2011 Dîner en Blanc at the World Financial Center (now Brookfield Plaza)

The first New York City Dîner en Blanc took place in 2011 at the World Financial Center, now known as Brookfield Place. It was the smallest number of guests the New York City dinner has had so far, which made sense for its first year. Nonetheless, the New York City harbor and 1 World Trade Center, which was still under construction, made a beautiful backdrop to the first incarnation of the pop-up dinner.



The dinner is organized in a pyramidal fashion led by a core team, the Dîner en Blanc International based in Montreal and local leaders. Under the local leaders are numerous group leaders, who each lead 4 to 5 tables of 50 guests each. Each guest brings everything they need to have a dinner – tables, chairs, tablecloths, plates, cutlery, food – or they can purchase food from

the caterers to pick up at the event (something that doesn't happen in Paris). Here in New York City, due to alcohol laws, you can't bring your own booze to the dinner. It has to be purchased through the caterer.

Each guest is given a meet up location somewhere around New York City, though in 2011, all guests walked to the site. With all the accoutrements of the dinner, the guests take the subway and are directed to a surprise location.

2012 Dîner en Blanc at Lincoln Center



The second year, 3000 guests descended upon Lincoln Center. We were able to take this time lapse video of the arrival and capture the massive party that went down on the plaza later. It was a stunning location and also a great spot for non-guests to see the scene from Broadway.

2013 Dîner en Blanc at Bryant Park



Bryant Park is one of those storied locations – no matter what event takes place there, the backdrop is gorgeous with the New York Public Library, Art Deco buildings like the American Radiator Building, and more modern buildings. The 2013 Dîner en Blanc took place in Bryant Park, leading to a dance party on the rear steps of the library.

2014 Dîner en Blanc at Nelson A. Rockefeller Park



Image by Dennis Gault

Nelson A. Rockefeller Park on the northern end of Battery Park City hosted the 2014 Dîner en Blanc with 4,000 guests. The sunset was beautiful and the pavilion was used as a DJ booth, leading to yet another dance party on the steps. Sensing a trend? There was also the return of the electric violinist, who was at the Lincoln Center and Bryant Park dinners.

2015 Dîner en Blanc at Hudson River Park



The 2014 Dîner en Blanc took place just north of the year before on Pier 26 of Hudson River Park. It was notable, not only for the scenery, but for being the last event to take place on the undeveloped pier before its renovation into a mixed-use recreational facility. That being said, the space was admittedly difficult to use with just two entry points for the 5,000 guests.

2016 Dîner en Blanc Location?



Just a wishful guess on our part: wouldn't it be lovely on Governors Island?

Unlike in Paris, where it's truly a pop-up – the 10,000+ guests simply show up in a coordinated location because there's an unspoken agreement between the city and the organizers, in New York City the space itself, even if outdoor, must be rented. This somewhat limits the possibilities of where the dinner can be located (and explains the higher cost of the dinners here in New York City versus in Paris). In addition, locations run by conservancies, like Central Park Conservancy, or Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy, have their own rules. For example, large scale catering can't be done in Central Park.

You might also notice that the New York City Dîner en Blanc has not been in any other borough than Manhattan yet. Some residents have been clamoring for Brooklyn, but there are difficulties there as well. Noise concerns for residents that live alongside Brooklyn Bridge Park and in Brooklyn Heights may hinder the possibilities of seeing the dinner there in the near future, and Prospect Park had its own white dinner this summer. But who knows right? We'd love to see it on Governors Island – especially with the opening of the new park there, Battery Park, Fort Tryon Park, or even Riverside Park.

What we do know – this year French champagne company Moët & Chandon and Apothic wines will be the sponsor, and if you want to hang out with us at Untapped Cities, sign up for the group of tables led by yours truly!

Next, see the locations of the Dîner en Blanc in Paris.