



# BASIL AND BUBBLY

*Two parts food, one part booze, and a dash of snark*

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## DÎNER EN BLANC – 2015

October 17, 2015 by [basilandbubbly](#) — [Leave a Comment](#)



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This Thursday, I had the unique opportunity to take part in the very first Diner en Blanc in Charleston. For those of you unfamiliar with Diner en Blanc, it's an invitation-only dinner club that gathers once a year, in all white, to have dinner at a secret location, only disclosed while in transit to that location. This year, that location was waterfront at Brittlebank Park. Diners wear their most elegant all-white attire, and carry with them white tables, chairs, linens, china, crystal, and silver to set up the seemingly impromptu high-brow picnic.

Creativity is encouraged, but so is keeping it classy. Men wore everything from white tuxedos to breezy white linen, women brought out their post-labor day white dresses and gowns, complete with fascinators and large white hats. Wine and champagne are the only alcoholic beverages allowed, and they were consumed in glass, crystal, or sterling — no plastic anywhere in sight.

Once all of the tables were set up and the food put out, the dinner commences with an en masse waving of white napkins. There's a joke in there somewhere, but I'll let you, reader, come up with it on your own. Big Band and Rat Pack style music is played by a live band throughout the meal. Premade picnics were available for purchase, but naturally, I preferred to put my own spread together ( and at a third of the cost of the premade options! Woot woot! ). I also tried to keep it as French as possible.

## THE SPREAD



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## CHEESE

- Hervé Mons Gabietou — a washed rind alpine-style semi-soft cheese from France, and one of my favorites.
- Shakerag Blue from Sequatchie Cove Creamery in Tennessee — Wrapped in Fig Leaves and soaked in whiskey... not French, but delicious and the perfect blue pairing for a little bubbly rosé.
- Le Delice de Bourgogne — Hands-down my all-time favorite cheese. Ever. It's *real* brie, not that junk that you can slice and pick up a piece of. This brie would slide right through your fingers. Like funky, creamy, oozy butter, this is my birthday brie. It is the last thing I hope to eat before I die; nothing else in the world compares.

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## CHARCUTERIE

- Prosciutto Melon “Candy” — melon cut into thick, rectangular chunks, wrapped with half a slice of prosciutto, and tied off at each end with a chive. Whimsical, but easy to eat!
- Calabrese Salame — coarse ground salami, seasoned with garlic, paprika, and cayenne pepper.
- Capocollo — a dry-aged salami, a mild salami to round out the flavor bombs of the calabrese and the prosciutto and melon.


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## PICKLED/CURED


- Castelvetrano Olives — meaty, buttery, bright alien-green that even the most fervent olive hater is bound to love.
- Hot Pickled Okra — spicy and a distinctly Southern treat, the hot pickled okra was a little bit of South Carolina on our European spread.
- Caperberries — the milder cousin of the caper is grape-sized, and a nice little hit of lemon and salt between cheeses

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- Smoked Salmon Rose — topped with capers, and a neufchatel, dill, and lemon juice spread on the side.
  - Baguette — aka “Cheese Spoon”
  - Dried Figs
  - Honey
  - Marcona Almonds — if you think you know what an almond should taste like but you have not had marconas, go out and buy some immediately. More buttery and creamy than their stringy California counterparts, marconas taste more like a cashew or a macadamia nut.
  - Almond Macarons — okay, I made like a million of these, and was planning on giving each person in my group of sixty people one, but the delicate cookies did not survive the bumpy commute to the final destination, so everyone at my table and the table next to me ate a smashed one, and I tossed the rest. A true culinary tragedy. Maybe next year I'll have more success with their transportation and packaging.
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Of course, we also had a bottle of Moët and Chandon Rosé. Alcohol does have to be pre-purchased and then picked up at the event, so next year I think we'll grab a few more bottles. They are served unopened, and we can bring home whatever we don't drink or share. Plus, unlike the other bottles up for sale, which had a small ( but reasonable ) markup, the Rosé was actually cheaper at Dîner en Blanc than it was at our local Total Wine, so that means it was pretty much free, right? Riiiiight...





Dinner concluded with huge sparklers, and the music transitioned from the live band to a DJ playing dance music. The dance floor instantly filled up. In addition to the dancing, there were several other areas of entertainment, including a media lounge for those with invitations ( not this girl ), a huge tower of champagne bottles overlooking the water, and a photo booth with all kinds of props and signs for capturing the evening's festivities.

Overall, it was an absolutely magical evening, and something I plan on doing every year. The upfront cost ( white tables, chairs, picnic basket, etc ) was a little daunting, but now I'll have those things for future years, and will just have to buy champagne and pack food. I highly recommend anyone who is considering attending the event to go for it! You can be sponsored by someone who attended a previous year to get an invitation, or you can sign up for the waitlist. If you know a volunteer for the event, they can give you an invitation, but the number they have to give out is very limited. If you'd like to see more pictures of the event, look for the hashtag #DEBchs on social media.

I can't wait to go next year!

