

**W**HEN I first heard of Diner en Blanc, I dismissed it, categorising it in the same group as the numerous “colour festivals” which have happened this year. It seems as if dressing in white has been the new prescription for everything from marathons to house music parties.

Then I stumbled across a picture of a Diner en Blanc event in Paris, which took my breath away.

With the Eiffel Tower in the background, guests were seated at dozens of long tables, dressed elegantly – women wore white hats and gloves, men wore white coats and formal pants.

By the time I realised I wanted to go to the event, all 1 500 tickets had been sold, so I put my name on an already lengthy waiting list.

By a stroke of luck, I scored two tickets, and so last Friday I dug out the only white dress I had, paired it with a new pair of white shoes and waited for the secret location to be revealed.

The concept behind Diner en Blanc is simple. Launched in 1988, a Frenchman by the name of Francois Pasquier decided to host a dinner party in Paris to reconnect with old friends. He asked guests to dress in white, so as to be recognisable to one another. Guests were told to bring their own crockery, cutlery and food. Paper or plastic plates, cutlery or napkins were strictly forbidden, with guests being encouraged to go all out to create a beautiful table.

Each guest was told to bring a friend, and the evening was such a hit that the initial invited guests wanted more friends to join in the following year. Over the years, the interest has grown and in 2011 the US launched its first Diner en Blanc in New York.

Last year, Diner en Blanc International was formed, spanning five continents.

Each city must follow a standard process: diners gather at a secret location with the sole purpose of sharing a high quality meal with good friends at the heart of one of the city’s most beautiful locations.

The Jozi event was held in the gardens of the National War Museum in Saxonwold – a museum I had no idea existed. Guests were asked to meet at eight different locations across the city, and were shuttled to the dinner by bus.

I was struck at the amount of effort people went to. No cream, beige or tan is allowed: every single person had to be dressed head to toe in white. Guests brought white picnic baskets filled with gourmet picnic fare (fast food is strongly discouraged), and some tables were spectacular, complete with fairy

# Spectacular dining event

*Guests share high quality meal at heart of secret, beautiful location*



Diner en Blanc in Joburg was held at the National War Museum in Saxonwold.

PICTURES: SUPPLIED

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Jozilicious

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lights and flower arrangements – all put together by the guests.

The traditions of the initial event have been carried through over the years. At 7.30pm sharp, guests were instructed to wave their white napkins in the air to signal the beginning of the dinner festival. At 8.30pm, helium balloons were distributed, with guests being asked to write a wish on a piece of paper, attach it to the balloon and release it into the air.

Seeing hundreds of white balloons floating into the air was definitely something to remember.

At 9.30pm, each guest was given a sparkler to light, signalling the opening of the dance floor. After surprise performances by the Rock-ateers and Flash Republic, a DJ played everything from old school classics to the latest RnB hits, and



Guests make their way to the venue.

people let loose. At 11pm sharp a trumpet call sounded the end of dinner, and a collective clean-up effort began, continuing until the site was as neat as it was prior to the start of the evening. After that, guests left together in the same way they arrived, by bus.

Given that last week was the first time Diner en Blanc took place in Jozi, I was quite impressed with the level of organisation – seating 1 500 people cannot be easy.

Bar a few sound glitches, the event ran smoothly, everyone seemed to know what to do in terms of

setting up their table.

I later discovered this is due to a network of volunteers.

Each bus is assigned a leader, who must manage all the guests on the bus and answer any questions. This leader is required to participate in meetings and receive information long before the event.

Tickets for the event were priced at R350 a person and tickets have to be purchased for two guests, no one may attend alone.

For an additional cost, guests were able to order a picnic basket which they were able to collect on the night. Guests must be invited by the hosts or register on the official website’s waiting list and wait for an invitation. There are plans to host Diner en Blanc events in Cape Town and Durban next.

Visit <http://johannesburg.dinerenblanc.info> for more details about the Jozi event.

For more ideas about things to do in and around Jozi, visit Hasmita’s blog: [www.joziligious-blog.co.za](http://www.joziligious-blog.co.za)

Hasmita was hosted by Diner en Blanc.

## Best of Stellenbosch comes to Summer Place

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WITH summer on its way, I’m sure I’m not the only one secretly hating Capetonians – not only for the sunset views of the stunning Sea Point promenade flooding my Instagram feed, but also for the abundance of vineyards on their doorstep.

While Joburg may struggle to compete in that regard, we do have our fair share of beautiful event venues – Summer Place being one of my favourites.

On October 30, Stellenbosch and

Summer Place are collaborating to create a memorable evening where Joburgers will be able to indulge in the very best of the Stellenbosch Winelands.

More than 100 wines will be available, sourced from premium wine farms like De Toren, Waterford and Kanonkop.

Annareth Bolton, chief executive of Stellenbosch Wine Routes, says the focus this year is to showcase Stellenbosch’s best wines, chefs, music, art and fashion in a carefully curated taste of Stellenbosch lifestyle – a

feast for the senses. Each wine will be teamed with a signature dish, which will be then be delivered in a unique “attraction” to boost the experience.

This could be anything from music to an intimate fashion show, or even a private one-on-one session with an art expert.

Five of the Stellenbosch Winelands’ best chefs have been selected to create gourmet dishes.

This year, Michael Broughton of Terroir (one of my favourite restaurants in South Africa) will serve a braised lamb risotto with spring

vegetables, while Grégory Czarnecki of Watercloof will pair his beef fillet and beer-braised beef croquettes with a rare selection of red wines.

George Jardine of Jordan restaurant will create a medley of soft polenta and kaaings, accompanied by cauliflower spoom and spicy greens, to enhance a blend of Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc wines.

Bertus Basson, of *The Ultimate Braai Master* fame, is chef at Overture restaurant. He will give a black-tie twist to his spice rubbed steak, combining this with Shiraz and

Pinotage wines exclusive to Stellenbosch.

Finally, Christiaan Campbell, executive chef at Delaire Graaf Estate, has come up with a creation featuring cured cob with asparagus, broad beans, new season potatoes, pickled sea lettuce and goat’s cheese, to pair with award-winning Sauvignon Blanc wines.

The event starts at 6.30pm and tickets, which are available from [www.webtickets.co.za](http://www.webtickets.co.za), are R500. This includes food, wine and entertainment.