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## **A Secret Parisian Picnic, Where Romance Reigned**



Piotr Redlinski for The New York Times

Dîner en Blanc, a luxurious, secret pop-up picnic, found its way into New York with an event in Battery Park City.

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“In about five minutes, I’ll have an even better story for you,” a man whispered to Nocturnalist on Thursday night as we stood in a sea of about 1,800 people all clad in

white evening wear. They were dining al fresco on the edge of the Hudson River in Battery Park City.

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**Piotr Redlinski for The New York Times**

Diners traveling to the picnic location. More than 31,000 people had been waitlisted.

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**Piotr Redlinski for The New York Times**

Dean Magdalin, with his Maltese dog, proposing to Flavia deBortoli.

We were at the New York City debut of Dîner en Blanc, a 23-year-old pop-up picnic that springs to life in places like the courtyard of the Louvre Museum in Paris.

On Thursday, diners met on street corners, where designated volunteers revealed the meal's secret location to them at 6:45 p.m. The lucky attendees — more than 31,000 people had been waitlisted, organizers said — brought their own food, tables, linen, china and silverware. They dressed in white to the hilt (we hope the French can forgive us for the one woman in a bra and go-go boots).

Dinner was lovely and elegant, but before we could get to the sublime meal, schools of white-clad people wended through the financial district with entire dinner services, and tables and chairs, in tow. It was, pardon our Yiddish, a schlep.

(At one point Nocturnalist — in the white jumpsuit! — got separated from the crowd. Unasked, a passer-by gave us directions. Wait, how did he know where a secret Parisian pop-up dinner party was being held? we asked. “I’m a New Yorker,” he said.)

But as we raised a glass of rosé to the rose-colored sunset slanting off the looming buildings and winking on the lapping Hudson, the city’s frustrations seemed as far away as, well, Paris. Electric candles on white-linen tablecloths flickered to life. All around us Champagne flutes clinked in white-gloved hands, brims of white hats dipped close in intimate conversation or white-plumed headpieces fluttered with the wearer’s laughter.

It was this atmosphere that led the man who said he had a story for Nocturnalist, Dean Magdalin, 39, to come all the way from Chicago with his girlfriend, Flavia deBortoli, 28, and their white accessory, Kinda, a Maltese dog.

And it was what lead him, far more than five minutes later (he was nervous, he shakily told Nocturnalist) to kneel down on one knee before the diners and Ms. deBortoli and propose marriage.

He was right, it was a better story than even the exquisite event: she said yes.