

# THE VANCOUVER SUN

## Q&A: David Hawskworth on serving up Dîner En Blanc

BY SHAWN CONNER, SPECIAL TO THE SUN AUGUST 21, 2013



### Dîner en Blanc

Aug. 22 | Secret location

Tickets: Sold-out, info at [vancouver.dinerenblanc.info](http://vancouver.dinerenblanc.info)

It's not yet Labour Day, so wearing white is still allowed. And for Dîner En Blanc, on Aug. 22, white is de rigueur.

Last year, the inaugural Vancouver edition of the 25-year-old event (started in Paris, naturally) drew 1,500 white-clad souls to Jack Poole Plaza. This year, 2,500 will arrive simultaneously at an as-yet-undisclosed location.

Besides adhering to a dress code, participants are required to bring their own picnic baskets, (white) folding tables, chairs and dinner wear. In exchange, they are treated to an evening of food and wine.

We chatted with award-winning chef David Hawskworth, who is overseeing this year's menu, about the challenges of cooking for hundreds of people, getting red wine stains out of our white pantaloons, and whether he can snag us an invitation to the sold-out event.

Q: What are the challenges of preparing food for hundreds of people?

A: Pulling through on the expectations of people. Everyone's going to expect a great meal. Just making sure people are happy. You can't please everybody, but we're aiming to exceed expectations.

Q: What about people with special dietary concerns?

A: Gluten free is quite the rage these days. There's certain components of what we're putting together, like bread crumb things you can sprinkle onto your salad, and if you don't want to put those on you don't have to. I think if anybody has got a serious health issue they're going to pack their own dinner anyway.

Q: Is the demand for gluten free food just a fad?

A: I think there are people with celiac problems. And then there are some people who want to cut it out of their diet so they say they're gluten-intolerant or something like that. Lactose used to be a big one a few years ago. That seems to have just fallen by the wayside. I get it, though. If you cut anything out of your diet, it's going to affect you. It was red meat for awhile. It's just never-ending. I'm sure tapioca is next!

Q: What is the best way to get red wine stains out of white clothes?

A: I think a bit of Javex, and maybe hit it with a bit of stain remover and hope for the best. And try to hit your mouth when you're eating and drinking, that's probably the best way to go.

Q: This is a very hot ticket — in fact, it's sold-out (to attend, guests have to have been invited by a member of the Dîner en Blanc organization). Have you had lots of people asking you for help getting in?

A: There's 2,500 people going, and this is the 25th anniversary of the event. We're doing 800 or 900 meals. There's no more room. I've told people I can't do anything about it.

Q: So you're not doing meals for everyone?

A: Half of them are bringing their own food. We had to cap it. I've got a huge massive refrigerated truck in the alley here, just to start storing the food. Food's starting to arrive, there's hundreds of pounds of kale arriving. It's quite nice to have more refrigerated space, that's for sure.

Q: So some people bring their own food? What's in it for them?

A: They get to sit outside, have a great time, meet some fun people and just enjoy the city and a picnic somewhere, and get their sparklers out at the end.

Q: Do you have an opinion on the trials and tribulations of restaurants like Pidjin opening up in the Downtown Eastside?

A: I like it. I love the fact there are some architecture and heritage aspects to it. Sticking a restaurant in a brand new glassy-type building, it's flashy. But that's why I waited so long to get my restaurant (Hawskworth) in here (Rosewood Hotel Georgia). I like the bones of the building. I think it makes a big difference to the whole experience. And when you're trying to open your own business, the rent is a key aspect, so people are ending up in cheaper and cheaper areas.

Q: What are the best and worst things about running a restaurant in a hotel?

A: We have a great infrastructure. It's such a beautiful building and the surrounding area is well looked-after and there's always a nice energy around. To be in a building with so much history in Vancouver is amazing. I guess the worst thing is maybe people thinking that you're open all day, and that you can whip them up a club sandwich at a moment's notice just because you're in a hotel.

**HAWKSWORTH RESTAURANT**  
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