



THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

HISTORY OF STATE DINNERS AT THE WHITE HOUSE

As part of an official state visit, the [White House State Dinner](#) is an opportunity for the President and First Lady to honor a visiting head of state. In addition to expressing goodwill and hospitality, the state dinner showcases global power and influence and sets the tone for the continuation of dialogue between the President and the visiting head of state.

The tradition of state dinners originated in 1874, when President Ulysses Grant hosted King David Kalakaua of the Kingdom of Hawai'i. In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt expanded the State Dining Room as part of a larger White House renovation, allowing for larger gatherings. While the White House underwent a complete interior reconstruction from 1948 to 1952, President Truman lived at Blair House and state dinners took place in local hotels.

The current traditions and formalities of state dinners were solidified during the 1950s and 60s. The First Lady and her staff are responsible for the elaborate planning and attention behind the ceremony of the state dinner. The event involves the creation of invitations and carefully selected guest lists, menus, flowers, table settings, seating arrangements and entertainment for the evening. The First Lady works closely with her social secretary, the executive residence staff and the State Department to coordinate every detail of the night.

As background for the upcoming state dinner with President Emmanuel Macron for the French state visit, below is a list of past French state dinners:

- October 22, 1931: State Dinner for Prime Minister Pierre Laval, hosted by President Herbert Hoover
- August 22, 1945: State Dinner for Provisional President Charles De Gaulle, hosted by President Harry S. Truman
- March 28, 1951: State Dinner for President Vincent Auriol, hosted by President Harry S. Truman at the Carlton Hotel due to White House renovations
- April 22, 1960: State Dinner for President Charles de Gaulle, hosted by President Dwight D. Eisenhower
- February 24, 1970: State Dinner for President Georges Pompidou, hosted by President Richard M. Nixon
- May 17, 1976: State Dinner for President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, hosted by President Gerald R. Ford
- September 15, 1977: Working Dinner for Prime Minister Raymond Barre, hosted by President Jimmy Carter

- October 18, 1981: State Dinner for President François Mitterrand, hosted by President Ronald Reagan (held in Williamsburg, Virginia)
- March 22, 1984: State Dinner for President François Mitterrand, hosted by President Ronald Reagan
- March 31, 1987: State Dinner for Prime Minister Jacques Chirac, hosted by President Ronald Reagan
- February 1, 1996: State Dinner for President Jacques Chirac, hosted by President William J. Clinton
- November 6, 2007: State Dinner for President Nicolas Sarkozy, hosted by President George W. Bush
- February 11, 2014: State Dinner for President François Hollande, hosted by President Barack Obama

The White House has hosted many [other notable state dinners](#):

- June 1939: A state dinner hosted for King George VI, the first visit to the United States by a British monarch.
- During World War II, President Roosevelt used State Dinners to recognize leaders of Allied-recognized exiled governments controlled by Axis powers, such as Greece and Yugoslavia.
- September 1959: Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev was a guest of honor hosted by President Dwight Eisenhower and First Lady Mamie Eisenhower during the height of the Cold War.
- December 1987: State dinner between General Secretary Mikhail S. Gorbachev of the Soviet Union and President Ronald Reagan after the signing of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, decreasing the Cold War buildup of intermediate range missiles.
- May 2007: President Bush hosted a white-tie state dinner for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.
- January 2011: President Barack Obama hosted a dinner for President Hu Jintao of China as part of his final trip to Washington as China's leader.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact press@whaa.org or Jessica Fredericks, Communications Director, at JFredericks@whha.org.

About The White House Historical Association

First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy envisioned a restored White House that conveyed a sense of history through its decorative and fine arts. In 1961, the White House Historical Association was established to support her vision to preserve and share the Executive Mansion's legacy for generations to come. Supported entirely by private resources, the Association's mission is to assist in the preservation of the state and public rooms, fund acquisitions for the White House permanent collection, and educate the public on the history of the White House.

Since its founding, the White House Historical Association has contributed more than \$47 million in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit www.whitehousehistory.org.

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