

# President Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama Host 2010 Governors Ball At The White House: Dinner Menu, Wines, Place Settings, Flowers



It was a gala bipartisan affair on Sunday evening when **President Obama** and **First Lady Michelle Obama** hosted the 2010 Governor's Ball at the White House, the first large White House dinner of 2010. The National Association of Governors is in Washington for their annual winter meeting, and the White House traditionally hosts a Governors Ball for the group. In addition to the state leaders, Cabinet Secretaries **Tim Geithner** and **Ken Salazar** were in attendance, as was Chief of Staff **Rahm Emanuel** (the White House provided no guest list). The dinner menu was traditional, old-school American, with some post-modern Obama embroideries. (Above: President Obama raises his glass in a toast, as Minnesota Governor **Tim Pawlenty** laughs)

Dinner took place in the State Dining Room, something of a rarity at the White House; the room tends to be multi-purpose, since the Obamas have hosted few formal dinners. Beef and potatoes were the centerpiece: The entree was **Rib Eye Roast with Shrimp Scampi**. The menu also finished with **Baked Alaska**, which is perhaps the best-known dessert in existence that's actually named after an American state, and a subtle homage to the fact that the dinner was for America's state leaders. President and Mrs. Obama also hosted a formal dinner for the National Governors Association in 2009, but last year it wasn't called "the Governors Ball."

In keeping with Mrs. Obama's focus on healthy offerings, vegetables were, of course, highlighted on the menu, with a **Seven-Layer Salad** offered as part of the main course. No produce was used from the White House Kitchen garden for tonight's dinner, however, according to an East Wing spokesperson, due to the recent heavy snowfall in Washington. But White House honey from the South Lawn beehive was used by **Executive Pastry Chef Bill Yosses** to create the dessert. The full menu is below. (Above: A long view of the State Dining Room during the President's brief toast)



In his brief opening toast to the Governors, President Obama made reference to last year's dinner.



"The is not too stiff of an affair, because last year, Ed Rendell led a conga line," President Obama said. "We still have photographs that we may use."

Earth, Wind & Fire provided the entertainment for last year's event, and yes, there really was a conga line.

Pre-dinner cocktails were held in the Cross Hall, the area on the State Floor that's between the State Dining Room and the East Room, with tall tables set up for leaning. The tables had the same linens as those used for dinner, which are described below. (Above: Mrs. Obama during the President's toast)

Grammy-award winning singer and composer **Harry Connick, Jr.** and

his Big Band were the entertainment for the evening, and they performed in the East Room, which was decorated with tall branches of bright yellow Forsythia, arranged on the fireplace mantels and tables. In the early afternoon, Mrs. Obama hosted school children from DC's Miner Elementary School, for a special music and history lesson with Connick, which also took place also in the East Room. Mrs. Obama told the kids that the Governor's Ball was "a good chance for people to *not* talk about things they don't agree with, and just have fun...and get to know each other." Mrs. Obama also told media at the event that she would be wearing a white gown to the Ball, but apparently she had a change of heart, because she wore a black gown instead. (*Above: Mrs. Obama and Connick during the afternoon music event*)

## 2010 White House Governors Ball Menu

### First

French Onion Soup with Croutons

*Wine Pairing:* Sugarleaf Vineyards Petit Manseng 2008 (Monticello, VA)

### Main

Rib Eye Roast with Shrimp Scampi

Roasted Potatoes

Carrots and Mushroom Caps

Seven Layer Salad

*Wine Pairing:* Landmark Vineyards Syrah "Steel Plow" 2006 (Sonoma County, CA)

### Dessert

Baked Alaska

*Wine pairing:* Fenn Valley "42 Ice Wine" 2008 (Fennville, MI)

Last year's dinner menu for the Governors also featured beef. The wines deserve particular notice; each vineyard is an award winner, and in keeping with the White House practice of highlighting regional American offerings, these represent both coasts and as close to the middle of the country as is possible, for wine making. Each vineyard state, in a hilarious side note, also has either a 2010 gubernatorial race or a Senate race that is critical for White House interests. Also, Sugarleaf Vneyard is a boutique winery that is African American owned, and that's something of a rarity among American wineries. (*Above: California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger raises his glass during the President's toast. He was seated with Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, according to pool*)



### Place settings, Linens, Flowers

The round tables each seated ten, and linens were a creamy white with a black paisley pattern. The place settings reflected Mrs. Obama's new tradition of mixing Presidential patterns, and the patterns chosen also symbolically represented a bevy of states. (*Above: A detail of the linens*)

The service plate was the **Clinton State China Service**, which was commissioned for the 200th anniversary of the White House. It was created in 2000 by Lenox, of Trenton New Jersey. This is the only White House china service that features architectural renderings of the White House, rather than the Presidential seal, or a decorative motif. A cream

soup cup and saucer from the **Johnson State China Service** was at each place setting; these are from 1968, and created by Castleton China, Inc., in Pennsylvania. **Kennedy glassware** was used, and these were originally made by the Morgantown Glass Guild, Morgantown, West Virginia, in 1961; and supplemented in 1991 by Lenox, Inc. Water goblets from the **Franklin D. Roosevelt State Glassware Service** were used; these were originally made by Tiffin Glass Co., Tiffin, Ohio, and cut by T.G. Hawkes & Company, Corning, New York, 1938-1955. These were re-ordered in alter years, due to breakage.



Flatware was the **King Charles flatware service**, made by Gorham of Providence, Rhode Island, in 1974. This was supplemented in 2006 by Lenox Inc., which now owns the Gorham molds.

**Floral arrangements** were low, in gold bowls, with a variety of pink, hot pink, orange and pale pink roses, asters, dahlias, and freesia, designed by White House florist **Laura Dowling**, in what is the second largest outing of her new career. Dowling made her debut as official florist at November's State Dinner for India. Four tall white candles in silver candlesticks were on each table. Chairs were the gold-tones chairs that are always used in the State Dining Room. In the East Room, where the evening's entertainment took place, huge vases of bright yellow Forsythia branches were placed on fireplace mantels. (*Above: The flowers*)

An interesting study in scandal, *below*: New York's **Governor David Paterson** during dinner; he's currently under assault from the *New York Times*, among other media outlets; in the foreground, blurry, is South Carolina's **Governor Mark Sanford**, who is in the midst of being divorced by his wife, **Jenny Sanford**, thanks to an extra-marital affair that was so broad it included Argentina and the Appalachian Trail...