

Be Their Guest: The Dinner Party + Ticket Giveaway!



Ladies and gents, I've noticed lately that I've felt the FOMO guilt come over me. Anyone else? Fear of Missing Out. Chicago is the City of Broad Shoulders and so much to do, if you blink, you'll miss amazing concerts, new art exhibits, and trusted and novelty restaurants. I can't count the number of times I've realized I've missed an opportunity to experience culture in this city, discovering them after they came and went.

This is why I'm so excited that I received an email from a creative, enthusiastic entertainer and connector, Elysabeth Alfano, the host of WTTW's Fear No ART. She reached out to share information about a new event she is the mastermind behind called: The Dinner Party. And this time, I was determined not to miss out. I was almost instantly sold by the name, even before I learned more about it, but I was even more pleasantly surprised to find out that this live food + art fusion experience is not a supper club (which is exciting in its own right).

What is it? I asked. It is an monthly event held at City Winery that includes three national or local celebrities and a local Chicago chef who have impromptu conversation at the dinner table, live Tweeting and the audience (guests) taste the chef's entrees, appetizers, chocolate, and wine! It's filmed and live, and the audience gets to be a part of the party. Food, wine, chocolate, live and social media conversations? Um, yes, please! I was so curious to learn more, so I interviewed Elysabeth. I just went from Fear of Missing Out to Fear No ART - so, I'll fear not and dive in! Dive in to The Dinner Party:

Rebecca: What is your background and what inspired The Dinner Party concept?

Elysabeth: I have been interviewing celebrities and artists for over 20 years, long before I started my first TV show on WTTW, Fear No ART. I know so many interesting and inspirational people with so much in common given their stories of how they became celebrities and/or successful artists...but they don't know each other. So I had a dinner party one night with a known chef, two known musicians, a known author and a neuroscientist. We stayed until 4 am, pulling out the guitar, singing, eating, drinking, laughing. No one wanted to leave and I thought, 'This would make a great show!?' That is how my show Fear No ART presents The Dinner Party was born.

R: The Dinner Party seems to find the perfect balance of food and art. How do you think food and art play together?

E: Nothing brings people together like food. Certainly food is its own well established art form. In addition, food (and wine!) bring people together and break down barriers, allowing for authentic and unscripted conversation. That's why the audience - - which shares in the food that the celebrity chefs make and, via Twitter, share in the conversations - - never wants to leave. They are really a part of something special, something unfolding in the moment.

R: How much planning went into the launch of The Dinner Party?

E: Gobs of planning goes into each Dinner Party because you have to work the schedules of people who are in demand and get everyone together on the same date! That's a feat! But the concept played out so naturally in my head that bringing Fear No ART presents The Dinner Party to life wasn't that difficult.

R: What has been the biggest surprise from The Dinner Party events?

E: Two things have been very surprising to me and one thing was a hunch I had that has been confirmed.

Surprise #1: Celebrities are so tired of the rote, pre-fabricated promotional situation that when they hear about the opportunity to eat and connect with fellow celebrities whose work they respect, they clear their schedule to be a part of the The Dinner Party.

Surprise #2: The Dinner Party is always on a Monday night. I assumed once it is over, people would run home. It has been the opposite. People stay and stay and stay. They talk to their neighbors that they meet during the show. They talk to the celebs. They have another drink. It is incredible. They don't even get up from their seat when it is over, they are connecting with other audience members so much.

Confirmation: People (celebs and non-celebs alike) are looking for true connection. This is why people stay. It is a chance to connect over food and wine with friends, new and old, and their favorite celebs.

R: Who is the intended audience for The Dinner Party?

E: Anyone. Really. I have been amazed by the mass appeal of The Dinner Party. Some come for their favorite chef. Some come for their favorite actor. Some come for their favorite musician. Some come for the conversation and have a great time.

R: How can chefs get involved?

E: Any chef can reach out to me. Happy to be in touch with all of Chicago's fantastic chefs and I want to highlight and promote as many of them as I can! (Contact Elysabeth)

R: What is one memorable dining experience you'll never forget in Chicago (aside from The Dinner Party)?

E: Ahhhh, do you remember the Savoy Truffle? When that restaurant closed, I was really sad.

R: We now live in a world where anyone can become a publisher, through blogs, do-it-yourself photography and video platforms, and easy to use recording tools. What advice would you give creative DIY publishers who are considering taking their work to the next level?

E: Be yourself, your full, true self. It will set you apart from everyone else and staying committed to that will be your carrying card. Trying to be anyone else (fit into any demographic or marketing department niche) will dis-empower you. You can't every be any stronger or more powerful or more original than yourself. Go with that!

R: Anything else those interested in The Dinner Party as a unique multi-sensory experience in Chicago should know?

E: The food tickets always sell out, usually by the day before the event. Get your tickets in advance.

Sold, yet? This month's The Dinner Party is coming up on Monday, February 17th and Chef Tim Graham of Travelle at The Langham Chicago, Lookingglass Theatre Artistic Director, Actor Andy White, Comedienne Susan Messing, architect Jordan Mozer and host Elysabeth Alfano. Anna Fermin is the opening act! Plus a special Valentine's Day treat from Vosges! Tickets are \$40 and include food, wine, chocolate, connections, and live, filmed entertainment! Check out the menu for this Monday's show and get tickets here - you'll see me there too!

And now?..

THE GIVEAWAY: Interested in checking out The Dinner Party? Thanks to Elysabeth, I am giving away one ticket to the May 12th The Dinner Party featuring Chef Pete from The Gage. This will be the last show until the Fall Season begins again in September! Just leave a comment on this blog **by February 28, 2014** telling a story of your most memorable dinner party and one random winner will be chosen to attend the May 12 event. I can't wait to hear your stories! You must be 18 or older to enter and live in Chicago.

A special thank you to Elysabeth Alfano for providing me with a ticket to attend the February 17th show and the giveaway ticket for the May 12 show. Can't wait to share my experience.