



# THE BRACEBRIDGE DINNER



# *The Bracebridge Dinner*

## *Christmas Dinner At Bracebridge Hall*

*The Ahwahnee Hotel  
Yosemite National Park  
December 18, 20, 22, 24, 25, 2001*

### *☞ The Relish ☞*

*Champagne Braised Endive and Pickled Baby Beets  
with Fresh Chevre*

### *☞ The Soup ☞*

*Roasted Cauliflower Bisque  
with Fried Garlic*

### *☞ The Fish ☞*

*Fennel Poached Salmon  
with Winter Melon and Chervil*

### *☞ The Peacock Pie ☞*

*Drunken Quail  
with Fig and Blue Cheese Tart*

### *☞ The Boar's Head and The Baron of Beef ☞*

*Onion Seed Crusted Beef Filet  
with Truffle Potatoes and Port Wine Raisin Glaze*

### *☞ The Salad ☞*

*Butter Lettuce with Candied Pecans,  
and Citrus Basil Vinaigrette*

### *☞ The Plum Pudding and Wassail ☞*

*Plum Pudding and Hard Sauce  
Hot Mulled Cider  
Assorted Holiday Cookies and Chocolates*

# The Bracebridge Dinner

Yosemite National Park's Bracebridge Dinner has become a true American tradition since its inception seventy-four years ago in the magnificent Yosemite Valley.

This spectacular Christmas pageant takes place in The Ahwahnee's grand Dining Room, which is transformed into the majestic Hall of American author Washington Irving's legendary "Squire Bracebridge". Each December since 1927, the world-famous Hotel takes on the air of eighteenth-century England. The Dining Room of The Ahwahnee, its tables aglow with candlelight, is filled with the warmth and spirit of this special time of year. The evening abounds with a profusion of food and the ringing sound of voices. The cathedral windows look out onto the beauty of Yosemite Valley, and the spirit of all things beautiful cannot help but be felt, as one is enveloped in the joy of the season.



The Hall is silenced with solemn chime tones. A lone voice is heard in the darkness:

*"Let all mortal flesh keep Silence  
And with fear and trembling stand.  
Ponder nothing earthly minded ...  
As the Light of Light descendeth  
From the Realms of Endless Day ..."*

The haunting invocation swells. Light after light appears, warming the Great Dining Hall. Darkness settles on The Yosemite Valley. Candlelight illumines the room and The Hall resounds with "Alleluia!". The Bracebridge Dinner has begun.

Bracebridge guests are greeted by The Housekeeper:

*"The Seasons have now come full circle.  
Earth is blanketed with Peace.  
We gather in convivial mood to revel,  
Yet as well to pay tribute to Nature's own tradition.  
For within the walls of this hallowed Valley  
Where the Heart, restored, is filled with gladness,  
Nature speaks of deepest Peace.  
And the Soul, renewed by Nature's grandeur and tranquility,  
Affirms our desire for Love and Brotherhood to unite us all,  
As we are here united in the Harmony of Music and Nature."*

For music, nature and peace are indeed united in this evening – a tribute to a timeless season of joy. The Dinner continues as The Squire's Serving Party carries elaborately decorated courses down the aisle for his approval: The Fish, The Peacock Pie, The Boar's Head and The Baron of Beef. Each course is announced by The Manor Parson. Guests are serenaded by Minstrel and Carolers. The Lord of Misrule entertains all with antics and pranks, and Villagers partake of The Squire's largesse as glorious music fills The Hall.

The Holly, symbolizing peace and goodwill, is presented to Squire Bracebridge by The Housekeeper, as The Parson prays that peace and love abide in our hearts forever. He then announces the final course and The Plum Pudding and Flaming Wassail Bowl are borne down the aisle. The Squire invites his guests to raise Wassail Cup "and drink to joy this Christmas night."

"The Feast is ended; not the pleasure . . ." intones The Parson, and the women's chorus sings this ode to the beauty of Yosemite and the Season:

*"Now the joyful bells are ringing.  
All ye mountains praise the Lord!  
Lift your hearts like birds awinging,  
All ye mountains praise the Lord!  
Now our fes'tal season bringing  
Kinsmen all to bide and board.  
Sets our cheery voices singing,  
All ye mountains, praise the Lord!"*

Squire Bracebridge and his Family lead the final procession from The Hall, his guests rising to toast, one last time, the love and joy of the Season.

## The History

The Ahwahnee was completed in 1927. Yosemite Park and Curry Company President Donald Tresidder envisioned a Yuletide celebration in the new hotel's Dining Room. He hired Garnet Holme, a California pageant director, to create an "event", and The Bracebridge Dinner took its initial form, a performance loosely based on Washington Irving's sketchbook "A Christmas at Bracebridge Hall". Tresidder and his wife Mary Curry Tresidder played the parts of Squire and Lady Bracebridge.

Holme's untimely death in 1929 left a void in the direction of this new festivity. A cast member of the first two seasons – a part-time Valley resident who had played the part of The Lord of Misrule – was asked by Tresidder to take on the task of reworking the event. This cast member was Ansel Adams, who was well on his way at that time to becoming one of the world's finest photographers. Adams did a brilliant job of creating the pageant as we know it today. His original script of the "new" Bracebridge Dinner has remained largely intact since that initial performance in 1929. A fine pianist as well as photographer, Adams' knowledge of music evidenced itself in the meter of his script, which was written with a feeling of four beats per line to reflect the four-beat music chosen for the male chorus processions.

Adams' unique personality brought dignity and stature to the role of Major Domo. He ruled over Squire Bracebridge's household, leading the presentation of larger-than-life replicas of each course of food down the aisle for The Squire's approval as the chorus sang. The rich voice of Adams' wife Virginia, who played the part of The Housekeeper for many years, brought authority to the role.

Adams brought Yosemite architect Theodore Spencer and The Hotel's interior decorator Jeanette Dyer Spencer on to the creative team to build the set for The Dinner. Mrs. Spencer, who designed the stained glass windows in The Great Lounge of The Hotel, created the magnificent window behind The Squire's Head Table and the rondels that hang in the cathedral windows of The Dining Room. The Squire's guests would little guess the "stained glass" is finely-painted parchment paper, carefully preserved through the years. Mrs. Spencer designed the original costumes and decorated the stage and head table that fill the alcove of The Dining Room. Her husband Ted designed and built the entire set.

In 1934, Adams asked well-known San Francisco choral conductor Eugene Fulton to lead the eight-member male chorus. Presentation of The Dinner was suspended during World War II and Fulton became Musical Director when The Bracebridge Dinner resumed in 1945. The musical aspect of The Dinner took on a new luster. A chorus of outstanding voices was assembled, and The Bracebridge Dinner's reputation for fine music was born. Fulton's wife Anna-Marie became the organist for The Dinner and accompanied the choral concerts that filled out the festivities of the holiday week. Mrs. Fulton also handled the ever-growing administrative details of The Dinner.

As demand for attendance at The Dinner grew, a second performance was added in 1956. Word of this spectacular event continued to spread throughout the country as well as abroad. The request for attendance continued to grow until the waiting time for tickets to The Dinner was eight years. In the early 1970's, the National Park Service instituted a lottery, which assured the opportunity to attend was spread evenly over the many thousands of requests that poured in each year. A third Dinner was instituted on December 24 in 1978 and in 1985 two additional Dinners were presented for the first time on December 22, which allowed those who were unable to attend on Christmas Eve or Day the experience of this great tradition. Yet two more Dinners have been added to the 2001 season, as word of this magnificent pageant spreads throughout the world.

In 1973 Ansel Adams retired from The Bracebridge Dinner and Eugene and Anna-Marie Fulton assumed the Directorship of the pageant. Tom Maxwell of Stagecraft Studios took over the lighting and costuming assignment. Rich jewel tones were introduced to The Dinner in the beautiful new costumes designed by Evelyn Christiansen. Martha Miller became liaison between the Hotel and performers. In addition to coordinating all aspects of Hotel activity in relation to The Bracebridge Dinner, she fills the integral role of Production Manager of The Dinner, keeping the impeccably-timed performances running smoothly.

In 1978 after completing the dress rehearsal for The Bracebridge Dinner, Eugene Fulton died unexpectedly of heart failure. His family stayed in The Valley to complete the performances and the following year his daughter Andrea joined her mother, Anna-Marie, in the direction of The Dinner. Since that time Andrea has expanded Adams' and her parents' vision of The Dinner. She augmented the existing role of Housekeeper to take the place of the part of Major Domo, which Adams and her father had played. She composed The Dinner's opening poetry to embrace the majesty of Yosemite Valley, created the awe-inspiring candlelight procession, implemented the women's chorus, and wrote additional text to fine-tune the production she inherited. In the Spring of 2000, Andrea called upon George Baker, who plays the role of The Parson, to collaborate in developing The Bracebridge Dinner even further. Baker, a fine musician and writer, brought his considerable skills to the newly-formed artistic team. The two have created additional roles, written text to enhance the existing players' characters and the drama of The Dinner, reworked many musical selections and expanded the humorous aspect of the production. Fulton has always felt that the joy of presenting The Bracebridge Dinner throughout these many decades has been found in the ability to look upon the performance as a living theatre piece and to watch it develop and flourish.

The longevity of The Bracebridge Dinner's cast has created a remarkable sense of tradition and continuity. The year 2000 was the half-century mark of Andrea Fulton's participation in The Bracebridge Dinner. Through these 51 years she has played many roles, starting at the age of five as a Villager. Ansel Adams created the role of Ward of the Squire for her, which she played for many years. She then portrayed the minstrel for 18 years. Assistant Conductor Conrad Walla is celebrating his forty-third year with The Dinner and The Fulton Chorale. Many of the singers have been with The Chorale for twenty to twenty-five years and their personalities and voices have enhanced the production throughout the years. The longevity of their participation endows The Dinner with its legacy of tradition and excellence. For indeed, the essence of The Bracebridge Dinner is its music. The Chorale's fine and dedicated performers have enabled The Bracebridge Dinner to take its place as one of America's greatest traditions. May this historic heritage endure to become an integral part of the new millennium.

# The Bracebridge Dinner

## Production Staff

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Producer, Director, and Conductor - Andrea Fulton  
Assistant and Advisor to Director - Anna-Marie Fulton  
Assistants to the Conductor - Conrad Walla and Jonathan Khuner  
Bracebridge Coordinator and Production Manager - Martha Miller  
Costume and lighting Design - Tom Maxwell - Stagecraft Studios  
Costume Mistress - Donna Paige  
Bracebridge Hall Set Decorations - Greg Parker assisted by Howard Embry  
Lighting Assistant - Bill Figge  
Bracebridge Technician - Nick Sharf  
Sound Design - Sound On Stage  
Sound Operator - Pat Caley  
Production Assistant - Guy Larsen  
Page - Morgan Brewer  
Aides-de-Camp - Stephan Hammamciyan, Marilyn Thomte,  
Robert White, Andrew Rogers, Christian Rogers,  
Daryl Thomte, Stephanie Berry, William Germany  
Script - Ansel Adams, Andrea Fulton, George Baker  
Set Design - Theodore and Jeanette Spencer, Andrea Fulton

## Cast

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Merrick, Squire Bracebridge - Michael McCarthy  
Agnes, Lady Bracebridge - Laura Sextro  
Miss Cecily, Daughter of Merrick and Agnes Bracebridge - Cecily Khuner  
Lady Anne of Bracebridge, Merrick's Mother - Anna-Marie Fulton  
Simon Quill, Parson of Bracebridge Manor - George Baker  
Augusta Billingsly, Housekeeper of Bracebridge Manor - Andrea Fulton  
Llewellyn, The Lord of Misrule - Jeff Raz  
Theo, The Minstrel - Joni DeGabriele  
Hubert, The Chef - Andrew Moore  
Dame Martha Stalwart - Kathryn McGeorge  
The Soloists - Joan Jaques, William Pickersgill, Michael Rogers  
and Ron Schrieve  
Andrew, The Squire's Page - Andrew Rogers  
The Table Servitors - Richard Sextro and Gregory Sextro  
The Organist - Lynn James  
The Understudies - Kathryn McGeorge and Matt Kizer

## The Andrea Fulton Chorale

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George Baker	Jay Krohnengold	Gregory Parker
Marilou Brewer	Cecily Khuner	Rachelle Perry-Ward
Susan Squires Cox	Debra Lambert	William Pickersgill
Lynn Crestin	Andrew Moore	Michael Rogers
Andrea Daniels	Joshua La Force	Elizabeth Rom
Joni DeGabriele	Ana Lucas	Ron Schrieve
John Erreca	Michael McCarthy	Jennifer Schwartz
John Jackson	Kathryn McGeorge	Bradley Smith
Joan Jaques	Charlene Nickels	Barton Thomte
Matt Kizer	Holly Noble	Conrad Walla
Angelina Kravitz	Autris Paige	Arlene White

This year's Bracebridge Dinners are dedicated to the memory of those loved ones lost in the struggle for individual freedoms and true democracy all over the world.

## Yosemite Concession Services Corporation Staff

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President - Cindy L. Bower, CHA  
Vice President - Kevin Kelly  
Director of Operations - Robert Concienne  
The Ahwahnee General Manager - Larry Ross  
The Ahwahnee Food and Beverage Manager - Raymond Minias  
The Ahwahnee Rooms Operations Manager - Brett Archer  
The Ahwahnee Executive Chef - Jim Anilé  
Sous Cefs - Phil Alfano, Vincent Beluardo, Mary Wesley  
Pastry Chef - Eric C. Phillips  
Dining Room Managers - Dean Hessler, Janis Kunz, Rick Nicholson, David Sleight  
Beverage Manager - Stewart Good  
Hotel Decorations - Di Marchese  
Photography by Robert Holmes

