

French Tuesdays at Skybar: Riffraff need not apply

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The ultra-exclusive social-networking club French Tuesdays packed the equally exclusive Skybar at the Mondrian Hotel for its bimonthly event this week. And although it can be tricky to make it past the velvet rope at Skybar, it's doable. French Tuesdays, on the other hand, is for members only.

The dewy-faced young men and women in white, fuzzy angel wings who guarded the entrance to Skybar ran a tight ship as they matched IDs with "the list" and eyeballed supplicants to ensure they met the strictly enforced dress code: jackets for men and dressy attire for women.

The theme for this week's party was "Welcome Back to Paradise" and guests were strongly encouraged to wear something white. The clipboard [angels] (http://frenchtuesdays.com/index.php?page=events_galleries_view_picture&gal_id=601&evn_pho_id=102078) swooped to the rescue of partyers who'd forgotten to chic it up in the appropriate color palette, handing out ropes of plastic pearl necklaces and white derbies.

Like most things in life, French Tuesdays is all about who you know. The only way to become a member of this elite group is by invitation. It's a bit like trying to find that hip, new bar that's so cool it doesn't have a sign outside: If you're meant to be a member of the French Tuesdays scene, you'll just know.

"It's a way to keep up the quality of our membership and the privacy," said Gilles Amsallem, co-founder of the club, as well as Selavi Productions, the event-planning, parent organization.

Launched in New York in 2003 by Amsallem and Pierre Battu, a fellow expat looking to infuse the American social scene with a bit of Parisian sophistication, French Tuesdays has grown to its current membership of 18,000 worldwide, with groups in New York, Miami, San Francisco, Paris, Sao Paolo and, of course, L.A. The club has no fixed address, instead functioning as a roving party at local hot spots.

Partygoers were upscale, sleek and professional, most people circling the gray area between mid-20s and early 40s. The chatter was fairly international, as opposed to just en francais as one might expect at such an event.

"Our members are approximately one-third French, one-third American and the rest from all over the world," Amsallem said. "It's not about making everything French, but instead sharing the best of France with America -- the good taste, the food and wine, the savoir-faire, if you like."

Skybar's legendary view of Los Angeles laid out like a jeweled carpet was eclipsed only by the glow of hundreds of BlackBerrys, as the city's glitterati feverishly exchanged numbers in a flurry of high-society networking.

Francophiles not connected enough to hit up the next French Tuesdays event should check out the [Francophone Fest](#) at the Roosevelt Hotel on Nov. 19, also produced by Selavi. Presented by the Francophone Chamber of Commerce of L.A. and Orange County, the event promises food, wine and entertainment from various Francophone regions, including Morocco, Lebanon, Tahiti, Vietnam, Quebec and, of course, France.

-- Melissa Henderson

Photo credit: Sabina Bonvillain / Drury Brennan. Courtesy of French Tuesdays/Selavi.



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