

# [***Kishida cracks jokes and invokes 'Star Trek' as he and Biden toast US-Japan alliance at state dinner***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BS9-M751-JC5B-G3VM-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

WASHINGTON — Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida cracked jokes and invoked a touchstone of American culture as he quoted from “Star Trek” at Wednesday's state dinner, telling guests at the White House that he hoped the “unshakable relationship” between his country and the U.S. would "boldly go where no one had gone before.”

“I would like to propose a toast to our voyage to the frontier of the Japan-U.S. relationship with this word: boldly go," Kishida said, quoting the iconic opening monologue of the original “Star Trek” series.

Kishida, who spoke in English, and President Joe Biden exchanged warm toasts to each other and the decades-long, alliance between their nations as top figures from business, sports and ***politics*** — including an ex-president — looked on. The two leaders, who expressed a genuine friendship, pledged to continue to knit together their countries' interests in the face of global challenges.

Biden, 81, said he and Kishida, 66, came of age as their countries forged a strong bond in the decades after they were pitted against each other in World War II.

“We both remember the choices that were made to forge a friendship,” Biden said. “We both remember the hard work, what it has done to find healing.”

“Tonight,” Biden continued, “We pledge to keep going.”

As the White House served up a maximum dose of pomp to honor its close U.S. ally, notable guests included Bill and Hillary Clinton, who were on familiar turf for the event. The former president declared it “feels great” to be back before casting an appreciative eye at a portrait of his wife from her first lady days that was on display nearby.

Guests in bright spring colors and lots of shimmery gowns chatted ***politics*** and talked shop as they strolled in — that meant eclipse chatter from NASA Administrator Bill Nelson (“fabulous” view in Ohio!) and an assessment of Biden’s electoral prospects in Wisconsin from Gov. Tony Evers (looking good!).

But on a day when the inflation news from Washington was less than encouraging, Federal Reserve Chairman Jay Powell shot past reporters without stopping to chat. Olympic figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi, in a purple gown, said she didn’t expect to be out campaigning for Biden but nonetheless seemed bullish on his reelection. Actor Robert De Niro supplied the night's Hollywood quotient and seemed to channel one of his tough-talking characters when he was asked for his thoughts about the 2024 election.

“What do you think?” he retorted.

On a warm spring evening, the Bidens came stepped onto the North Portico to welcome Kishida and his wife, Yuko, who stood out in a flowing royal blue gown on the red carpet.

Inside, [*Jill Biden*](https://apnews.com/hub/jill-biden), wearing a beaded sapphire gown, had transformed the State Floor of the White House into what she called a “vibrant spring garden” for the evening. The floor of the famous Cross Hall was decorated with images giving the [*nearly 230 guests*](https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/04/10/white-house-releases-state-dinner-guest-list-4/) the feel of walking over a koi pond, a nod to fish that symbolize “friendship, peace, luck and perseverance,” the first lady said at a media preview Tuesday.

Guests at the head table with the Bidens and Kishidas included the Clintons, De Niro and Japanese pop duo Yoasobi.

Kishida, in his toast at the dinner, enthused over the splendor.

“First and foremost, to be honest my breath is taken and I’m speechless in front of such a huge number of prominent American and Japanese guests," he said.

A [*state dinner*](https://apnews.com/hub/state-dinners) is a tool of U.S. diplomacy, an honor doled out sparingly and only to America’s closest allies. In the case of Japan, the president has granted that honor for just the fifth time to an ally that he sees as a cornerstone of his policy toward the Indo-Pacific region.

Kishida is on an official visit to the United States this week. The state dinner is Biden's first this year.

The guests included plenty of Biden family members, including granddaughter Naomi and her husband, Peter Neal. Business moguls also were in force, including JP Morgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon, Apple CEO Tim Cook and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. Labor luminaries United Auto Workers President Shawn Fain and United Steelworkers President David McCall were also in attenddance. Both unions have endorsed Biden for reelection.

Dry-aged rib eye steak, cherry blossoms and the music of [*Paul Simon*](https://apnews.com/hub/paul-simon) were also part of the evening. Simon opened his after-dinner performance by playing guitar and singing two of his major hits, “Graceland" and “Slip Slidin’ Away."

Guests dined on a meal that was designed to highlight the “bounty of spring” in Japan and the United States: a first course of house-cured salmon that was inspired by a California roll and an entree of rib eye with shishito pepper butter, fava beans, mushrooms and onions. Dessert was salted caramel pistachio cake with a matcha ganache and cherry ice cream.

Some of Jill Biden’s favorite flowers, including sweet peas, roses and peonies, were arranged alongside imported cherry blossoms to decorate a mix of round and rectangular dinner tables in the East Room in shades of pink. A few floral centerpieces topped out at 6 feet (1.8 meters) tall.

Tables were set with a mix of place settings representing the administrations of Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and George W. Bush. Glass and silk butterflies danced over the tables.

Simon is one of Jill Biden's favorite artists, the White House said, adding that she chose him as a special tribute to Kishida because the prime minister also admires his music.

Simon’s career spans six decades, including performing as part of a duo with his childhood friend Art Garfunkel. The 82-year-old New Jersey native has earned numerous accolades, including multiple Grammys and a place in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

Kishida is the fifth world leader Biden has honored with a state dinner following counterparts from [*France*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-jill-united-states-macron-state-dinners-73f5a0d51b4058c7b96ec1e43c59a3e1), [*South Korea*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-south-korea-white-house-state-dinner-c7753825aa0d45ae4b3c6389b57d0067), [*India*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-modi-india-state-dinner-76fd29bd3d5f06454f47aee52bf30d17) and [*Australia*](https://apnews.com/article/biden-australia-albanese-white-house-state-dinner-c142f6a5a246a9035a65e7400d8aa1db).

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