



Mark Carney, the Canadian prime minister, and other G7 leaders were joined by Narendra Modi, the Indian premier, above

Dinner at Versailles goes down a treat

David Chazan Paris

President Trump's relationship with President Macron has veered between bromance and public acrimony.

Nevertheless, Trump was clearly flattered to be invited to dine *en tête-à-tête* with his French counterpart in the gilded grandeur of the Palace of Versailles after the G7 summit in Évian-les-Bains. Despite a clash over Trump's pre-summit threat to impose 100 per cent tariffs on French wine and champagne unless Paris scraps its digital services tax, he praised Macron.

"The French president, who happens to be a very nice man, invited me to dinner at Versailles ... Versailles is not gold leaf. It's the real deal. I said, I'd like to."

There could hardly be a setting better calibrated to Trump's tastes, with the palace's chandeliers, acres of gilt and Hall of Mirrors. Few expect the dinner

to yield much beyond symbolism, however. Macron has vowed to stand firm against the tariff threat, bluntly telling Trump that "no one gains from tariffs".

According to a French government source, the invitation was aimed at giving Trump an incentive to stay for the full three-day summit rather than storming out early as he did at the G7 last year and in 2018.

Macron's office made the dinner more appealing by underlining the historic role of Versailles in France's alliance with American revolutionaries against Britain in the 18th century. However, the Elysée's claim that the treaty recognising US independence was signed at Versailles is historically inaccurate. It was signed in Paris.

Not everyone in Versailles is delighted to host the Trump-Macron show. With the town centre in virtual lockdown for security reasons and the

château closed to tourists, local businesses are counting the cost. "For us this means a loss of at least 50 per cent of our customers," said Caroline Raymond, of Le Petit Bouillon, a restaurant. Amandine, a resident, complained that she could not find a parking space. "It's a day to flee Versailles," she said.

In the US president's first term, Macron cast himself as a kind of Trump whisperer. The relationship has since frayed but Macron still believes their personal chemistry can help preserve some influence over Trump on Ukraine, Nato and European security.

However, Macron's attempts to placate Trump have not always gone to plan. Asked in March about Macron's co-operation on forming a coalition to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, Trump graded him: "On a scale of 0 to 10, I'd say he's been an 8. Not perfect — but it's France. We don't expect perfect."