

# O.J. Simpson's last drink as free man wasn't juice

## NFL Hall of Famer's lifestyle went from foie gras to prison food

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On the eve of the 13th anniversary of O.J. Simpson's high-profile double-murder acquittal, the former NFL star apparently needed a drink.

Simpson laid low on Oct. 3 and enjoyed a quiet drink at an established Las Vegas restaurant. Accompanied by a few close friends, Simpson approached the bar, ordered a Johnny Walker Black and Coke, and enjoyed it quietly.

There was no party at the Palms or splashy soiree on The Strip the night before the jury delivered their verdict in Simpson's latest criminal trial. Instead, he returned to Rosemary's Restaurant on West Sahara, where he had dined a few weeks earlier, had his drink and then called it a night. After all, it had been a long day and the Heisman Trophy winner had another big day ahead of him.

It was hardly a night for celebration: Earlier that day, after three long weeks of listening to secret audio recordings and hearing testimony from 22 witnesses, jurors heard closing arguments from attorneys.

Thirteen years ago, Simpson was found not guilty in the double murder of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman. A subsequent civil trial found him liable for the deaths, however, and placed a \$33.5-million judgment against him.

Though Simpson was surely hoping last week for a repeat acquittal of the criminal charges – or a hung jury, if nothing less – his attorneys had already prepared him for what was to come.

He and his co-defendant, Clarence "C.J." Stewart, faced 12 robbery, kidnapping and weapons charges following an altercation last year in a Palace Station hotel room during which two memorabilia dealers claimed they were robbed at gunpoint.

Simpson denied any guns were involved but witnesses testified otherwise. The case against Simpson was not promising, and the 61-year-old knew it.

On Friday, Simpson was called to the Clark County Regional Justice Center at 9:30 p.m. only to have the predominantly white, predominantly female jury confirm his worst fears.

After nearly 14 hours of deliberations, the nine-women, three-man jury delivered a decidedly different

verdict than what was heard 13 years before. Both men were found guilty on 11 felonies and one misdemeanor, including kidnapping with a deadly weapon and robbery with a deadly weapon. Both were denied bail and ordered into custody.

Simpson and Stewart were promptly handcuffed and transferred from the Regional Justice Center's courtroom to isolated cells in the Clark County Detention Center. They have remained there ever since.

The cold beige cinderblock walls of Simpson's tiny cell are a bleak contrast from the warm and welcoming surrounds of the restaurant where Simpson had been the night before the jury returned their verdict.

There is no ambient lighting, attentive serving staff or full-service bar at the Clark County Detention Center. Simpson spends most of his time there in a 12 by 14-foot cell, away from the rest of the prison population.

He gets three meals a day, but they're hardly gourmet. While Simpson often enjoyed meticulously prepared meals at Vegas' finest tables during the trial, a typical meal for him now is a far cry from the beef or foie gras that he enjoyed, with a nice glass of Californian chardonnay, after the first week of proceedings.

"He had our beef carpaccio, which is thinly sliced beef with blue cheese in the middle, and he had foie gras," Rosemary's front of house manager, James Repman, said.

"That was with an orange brioche bread and a Nevada nectarine coulis," he explained, noting, "It was good, for one of his last meals."

"He's come in a couple of other times to just have cocktails at the bar but that was the first time he was in for dinner," he said.

Repman said Simpson dined alongside his attorneys, Yale Galanter and Gabriel Grasso, and a few close friends who are regulars to the popular restaurant.

"He was a really nice guy, for what that's worth," Repman said.

Unlike many of Simpson's former associates, who have pitched book deals and sold everything from autographs to damning audio tapes, Rosemary's is not advertising or flaunting their affiliation with Simpson. Repman answered questions about Simpson's patronage when contacted on Tuesday by the Sun, but made it clear that the owners and staff both did not want to capitalize on their recent guest's patronage. The bartender who served Simpson his last Johnny Walker Black and Coke declined to be interviewed.

There is no Johnny Walker or Californian chardonnay at the Clark County Detention Center.

"Dinner is served (at) about 4 p.m. and a typical dinner would be an enchilada casserole, Spanish rice, garden salad with dressing, two slices of bread, a cube of margarine, marble cake, and a fruit drink," Metro Police public information officer, Ramon Denby, said.

"It's not fancy," he said.

Breakfast – fruit, toasted oats, sausage hash and a slice of bread – is served at 4 a.m. and lunch is served

at 10 a.m.

“A typical lunch would include spaghetti with sauce, a meat patty, green beans, two slices of bread, one cookie and a fruit drink,” Denby said.

Simpson eats his meals alone, either in his cell or in what’s called the detention center’s outer day room. He’s classified as a “protective custody – isolation” inmate, meaning he is kept in strict solitary confinement.

Even his cell is closed off from the rest of the detention center’s 3,000 other inmates. Simpson spends most of his time within those four cinderblock walls with the door locked shut.

“He remains in his room for the majority of the day while the other inmates are out on their free time,” Denby said.

Inside his cell is what Denby describes as a “wooden bunk with a little mattress” and a sink/toilet combination unit.

“He’s allowed two books or magazines in his room and up to five religious books or articles,” Denby said, but nothing else.

The former All-Star running back gets three to four hours of free time a day to eat meals, shower, shave or watch TV.

Denby said Simpson gets one hour in the detention center’s recreation room every day, where there are a few tables, a shower and a TV.

During the trial, Simpson said that he hoped to stay in shape during proceedings by working in training sessions at the Las Vegas Athletic Club. He’ll have to be creative with his work-out regime until his Dec. 5 sentencing, however, as there is no athletic equipment for the 61-year-old to use at the detention center.

“He can walk, do push-ups, jumping jacks,” Denby said, but there are no weights or cardio equipment for him to use.

He also gets 30 minutes of visitation privileges twice a week, but Simpson essentially watches his visitors on TV when they come to see him: they are kept on a different floor of the detention center and communicate through a video telephone.

Attorney visits are allowed in addition to his hour a week of family visitation.

Simpson is allowed outside once a week, but that, too, falls short of the five-star amenities the football legend has grown accustomed to over the years, and is done in solitary confinement.

“It’s basically four concrete walls with a mesh cage on top,” Denby said. “He’s afforded this once a week for an hour.”

Simpson will be sentenced on Dec. 5 and will likely be transferred to a state prison afterward. Simpson’s lawyers have indicated they will appeal the case, as will Stewart’s.