

SPOTLIGHT on Boston Tea Parties

by **Clint Hamblin**

“Taxation without Representation” was the battle cry in 1773, but in the tea ceremonies of the 21st century, you’re more likely to hear, “I’ll have another, please,” as patrons of a different kind of Boston Tea Party enjoy afternoon tea at some of our most popular hotels.



Tea for Two at the Taj

Tea for Two at the Taj is practically a religious experience as you enter the chandeliered and mirrored lounge and gaze upon the marble and gold decor and stunning flower arrangements. The ethereal sounds of a harp fill this exquisite space with beautiful music as your afternoon tea is about to begin. Originally established in the late 1920s, this former Ritz-Carlton has been serving Bostonians and international guests with exotic teas and a light menu of delicacies for decades.

The Taj tea menu offers assorted sandwiches including lobster profiteroles, smoked salmon with caviar, and petite pastries served on three-tiered silver trays accompanied by tea served in ornate china tea sets decorated in gold. If you’re not a tea-totaler and prefer something “stronger,” the very knowledgeable food manager David Sweet may suggest the Blueberry Tea with Grand Marnier and Amaretto blended with piping hot Earl Grey in a teapot and served in a delicate china cup with three pierced blueberries on a stirrer. This is a truly unique tea that will warm more than the cockles of your heart.

Afternoon Tea at the Ritz-Carlton, Boston Common is certainly more contemporary as you sit by the mammoth mar-



Afternoon Tea at the Ritz-Carlton, Boston Common



Afternoon Tea at the Four Seasons

ble fireplace in the newly renovated grand lobby. Start your tea experience with champagne served with fresh strawberries and cream. A tea sampling box is brought to your table and inside, you’ll find an assortment of leaves for you to smell and select. These very special teas include pear caramel, green tea passion, wild blossoms and berries, Marrakesh mint, ginger twist, and vanilla bean.

Savor the scones filled with cranberries and served with Devonshire cream and assorted jams along with delicious petite sandwiches. The tea service is white with the tea sandwiches and desserts served on small white china. Wearing blue jeans or suits with ties, guests are heavily engaged in conversation, reading a book or surfing the internet on their laptop.

If you have a problem selecting that special afternoon tea, try the outstanding wild blossoms and berries tea. Even without sugar, it’s very sweet and full of berry flavor. The pear caramel tea is like sipping liquid pear and caramel candy.

Afternoon Tea in the Bristol Lounge at The Four Seasons Hotel is simple and straight forward with your selection of tea served in silver tea pots and, if you’re lucky to have a window table, a terrific view of the Boston Common.

The Four Seasons Royal Tea includes a glass of Kir Royal to start followed by several unusual petite sandwiches, including smoked white fish on rye and an herb scone with prosciutto. The desserts

stand out with banana walnut tea bread and a pistachio financier passion fruit roulade with white cake, blackberry and pistachio that will make you purr. Everything is so delicious you’ll wish the hotel offered take-out service.

The Swan’s Café at the Park Plaza Hotel is one of the few hotels in the United States to have their very own tea sommelier. The savvy and passionate Cynthia Gold is at the helm, and her Afternoon Tea menu offers tea-infused port wine, mar-tea-nis, Chai with Bailey’s, green tea cocktail and all sorts of innovative international tea blends served in the café located at the end of the Park Plaza Lobby.

Gold has traveled the world in search of new tea blends. “In India, I had the good fortune to be invited to pick tea leaves in the fields and then learn how to dry and store them,” Gold remembered. “The experience forever changed my life.”



The Costello family has tea at the Park Plaza

Several of the petite sandwiches include salmon cured in tea leaves, pork marinated in tea and a most delicious tea cooked duck served with chopped fruit. Call in advance and request a tea tasting with Cynthia Gold. It’s an amazing experience.

Whittard of Chelsea has recently opened its second tea shop in Boston and business, like the tea they sell, is brisk. Their tea bar offers various types of tea leaves along with recommendations of what teas to blend to make your very own personal blend. “We sell some coffee, but most of our customers are passionate about tea,” manager Erin Becker stated. Whittard’s offers tea samplings on Saturday afternoon at their Newbury Street and Faneuil Hall locations.

Boston Afternoon Tea events are very popular, so be sure to make a reservation for one of those great window or fireplace tables. Be brave and try something new and exotic. You’ll be surprised at the numerous varieties of tea available today.

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