

tea at fortnum and mason afternoon tea

Introduction to Afternoon Tea at Fortnum & Mason

Tea at Fortnum and Mason afternoon tea is more than just a meal; it is an experience steeped in British tradition and elegance. Located in the heart of London, Fortnum & Mason has been a purveyor of fine foods and exceptional teas since 1707. This iconic department store not only specializes in gourmet foods but also offers a quintessentially British afternoon tea that has become a must-visit for locals and tourists alike. In this article, we will explore the history, selection, and experience of afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason, highlighting why it remains a cherished tradition.

The History of Afternoon Tea

Afternoon tea originated in the early 19th century, a time when the British aristocracy enjoyed lavish meals and social gatherings. The concept is often attributed to Anna Maria Russell, the Duchess of Bedford, who found herself feeling peckish in the late afternoon. To remedy this, she requested a pot of tea accompanied by light snacks. This practice soon gained popularity among her friends and became a fashionable social event.

Fortnum & Mason played a pivotal role in this culinary tradition. As one of the first establishments to offer tea and snacks, it quickly became a hotspot for London's elite. The store's dedication to quality and service has helped to preserve the art of afternoon tea, making it a timeless ritual that continues to delight guests today.

The Tea Selection

One of the highlights of afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason is their extensive selection of teas. The store boasts a range of over 50 different blends, ensuring there is a perfect option for every palate. The tea menu includes:

- **Classic Black Teas:** Traditional favorites such as Earl Grey, English Breakfast, and Darjeeling.
- **Green and Herbal Teas:** Refreshing options like Jasmine Green and various herbal infusions.
- **Specialty Blends:** Unique concoctions created exclusively for Fortnum & Mason, providing guests with a taste of innovation.

The knowledge of the tea sommeliers at Fortnum & Mason enhances the experience, as they guide guests in choosing the perfect tea to complement their afternoon tea service.

The Menu Experience

Afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason is a multi-course affair, designed to tantalize the taste buds while providing a feast for the eyes. The menu typically consists of three main components: sandwiches, scones, and pastries.

1. Sandwiches

The first course features a selection of delicate finger sandwiches. These are meticulously crafted and often include:

1. **Cucumber Sandwiches:** A classic choice, served with cream cheese on soft white bread.
2. **Smoked Salmon:** Paired with dill and a hint of lemon.
3. **Egg Mayonnaise:** A rich and creamy filling, often seasoned with cress.
4. **Coronation Chicken:** A flavorful blend of chicken, curry, and mango chutney.

Each sandwich is cut into dainty portions, ensuring an elegant presentation and easy consumption.

2. Scones

The second course is perhaps the most iconic part of afternoon tea: the scones. Fortnum & Mason serves warm, freshly baked scones that are light and fluffy. Traditionally, these scones are accompanied by:

- **Clotted Cream:** A rich, thick cream that is a must-have with scones.
- **Jam:** A selection of house-made jams, including strawberry and raspberry.

The ritual of spreading jam and cream on scones is a cherished part of the experience, and guests are often encouraged to engage in friendly debate about the correct order of application.

3. Pastries and Cakes

The final course of afternoon tea features an array of exquisite pastries and cakes. The selection can vary, but guests can typically expect to find:

1. **Classic Victoria Sponge:** A light sponge cake filled with strawberry jam and cream.
2. **Chocolate Éclairs:** Cream-filled pastries topped with rich chocolate icing.
3. **Fruit Tarts:** Crisp pastry shells filled with pastry cream and topped with fresh seasonal fruits.
4. **Macarons:** Delicate almond meringue cookies filled with flavored ganache.

These treats are not only delicious but also beautifully presented, adding to the overall aesthetic of the afternoon tea experience.

The Setting

Fortnum & Mason offers a stunning backdrop for afternoon tea. The Diamond Jubilee Tea Salon, designed by David Collins, features elegant décor, plush furnishings, and large windows that allow natural light to flood the space. The ambiance is both luxurious and welcoming, creating the perfect setting for relaxation and indulgence.

Guests are often treated to live piano music, enhancing the sophisticated atmosphere. The attentive staff, dressed in smart uniforms, provide impeccable service, ensuring that every need is met throughout the experience.

Why Choose Fortnum & Mason for Afternoon Tea?

There are several reasons why afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason is a must-try experience:

1. Tradition and Heritage

Fortnum & Mason has a rich history that dates back over 300 years. This heritage adds a layer of authenticity to the afternoon tea experience, allowing guests to feel connected to British culture and tradition.

2. Quality and Attention to Detail

Every aspect of the afternoon tea service is meticulously curated. The quality of the ingredients, the presentation of the food, and the attentiveness of the staff all combine to create a memorable experience.

3. Variety and Customization

With an extensive tea selection and a menu that can be tailored to dietary preferences, Fortnum & Mason ensures that every guest can enjoy an afternoon tea experience that suits their individual tastes.

4. Perfect for Special Occasions

Whether celebrating a birthday, anniversary, or simply enjoying a day out in London, afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason provides an elegant setting for any special occasion.

Conclusion

Tea at Fortnum and Mason afternoon tea is more than just a meal; it is a celebration of British culture, tradition, and exceptional culinary artistry. From the carefully selected teas to the beautifully crafted sandwiches, scones, and pastries, every element is designed to provide an unforgettable experience. Whether you are a local or a visitor to London, indulging in afternoon tea at this iconic establishment is a delightful way to immerse yourself in the rich heritage of British dining. So, why not treat yourself and experience this timeless tradition at Fortnum & Mason?

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the history behind the afternoon tea tradition at Fortnum & Mason?

Fortnum & Mason has a rich history of afternoon tea dating back to the 18th century when it became popular among the British aristocracy. The iconic tea salon has been serving this quintessentially British experience since 1926.

What types of teas are offered during the afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason?

Fortnum & Mason offers a selection of their own blends, including the famous Fortnum's Royal Blend, along with a variety of black, green, and herbal teas to suit all palates.

What are the signature pastries and treats served during the afternoon tea?

The afternoon tea includes a selection of delectable finger sandwiches, freshly baked scones with clotted cream and preserves, and an array of exquisite pastries such as cakes, tarts, and seasonal delights.

Is it necessary to make a reservation for afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason?

Yes, it is highly recommended to make a reservation in advance, especially during peak times and weekends, as it can get quite busy.

What are the dress code requirements for afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason?

The dress code is smart casual; guests are encouraged to dress elegantly while feeling comfortable. It's a great opportunity to enjoy a special occasion in a refined setting.

Are there any vegetarian or vegan options available during afternoon tea?

Yes, Fortnum & Mason offers vegetarian and vegan afternoon tea options that include a variety of plant-based sandwiches, scones, and pastries to cater to different dietary preferences.

What is the atmosphere like during afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason?

The atmosphere is elegant and sophisticated, with a touch of traditional British charm. Guests can enjoy live piano music and the beautifully decorated surroundings that enhance the overall experience.

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