

# High Tea at 'Hippopotamus'

A little bit of pampering never goes amiss. And there's no shortage at Wellington's Museum Art Hotel conveniently located opposite Te Papa. From the moment guests enter the vast elegant lobby, filled with its impressive collection of New Zealand contemporary art and remarkable antique furniture, the scene is set for a memorable visit.

During a trip to the capital, I took time out from my hectic pre-Christmas schedule to indulge in 'High Tea' served at the Hippopotamus Restaurant located on the third floor of the Museum Art Hotel. The views over Wellington Harbour from the restaurant are stunning, and the décor, diverse in design and colour, is accentuated by a gorgeous selection of lavishly upholstered armchairs. The sort you want to go home and copy – but the result will never look quite the same.

High Tea consists of 'French delights' with a selection of inviting tea blends – Moroccan Mint Green Tea, Rose and French Vanilla Tea, Mediterranean Mandarin – through to New Zealand's staple favourite, Earl Grey. Guests can complement the High Tea experience with a glass of champagne or one of the numerous cocktails.

A 'Chamomile Margarita' was the final choice from the list of options provided by our helpful waiter. The mix of chamomile-infused tequila, lemon, agave nectar and pineapple in the cocktail prepared my palate (a plausible excuse for this added indulgence) for the delicacies designed by award-winning Executive Chef Laurent Loudeac and Pastry Chef Louis Sergeant.

## AFTERNOON TEA.

(Woman)

I suppose there was a time when afternoon tea was a thing unknown, but I am happy to say that I cannot remember it. It is certainly a glorious institution.

## AFTERNOON TEA.

"Four O'Clock."  
A Pleasant Function Taught by English People.  
("The Daily Mirror.")

Certainly, afternoon tea in Paris is quite an enjoyable function, and one that nobody should willingly forgo, were it only for the little spice of novelty and the foreign charm that seems to be dispensed along with the quite palatable tea and the hard beetroot sugar that is given.

During a recent visit to Paris, writes a correspondent, I made a point every afternoon in the week of having tea at a different place, and I should advise all who like to study frocks and frills to do the same. But afternoon tea is so expensive in Paris, someone may urge.

Not at all, if one measures one's money's worth by the enjoyment one obtains.

Begin at the famous Rumpelmayer's in the Rue de Rivoli. Pass through its fascinating revolving glass doors at from four to half-past any afternoon, and ensconce yourself at one of the teak-wood tables with its marble top. The glittering mirrors and the frescoes of sylvan scenery that arrest the eye on entering seem the fitting framework for the pretty frocks and the chic hats that fill the spacious tea-rooms for the next hour and a half.

But first pay the requisite visit to the counter near the door, whereon are set in long rows the most tempting and fascinating patisserie. A trim waitress, with hair coiffeured as only a Frenchwoman can arrange hers or have it arranged for her, hands you a small plate, and with a silver cake-slice and fork deftly serves you with your choice – perhaps the delicious éclair which jus' reveals its alluringly frothy cream to the gaze of the purchaser.

Do not provide cakes or biscuits so crisp that one is unable to eat them without a very audible crunch, crunch. Always avoid such cakes as you constantly get at other houses. In many towns, where people buy and do not make their cakes, it frequently happens that you have almost the same cakes at every house you take tea at.

Three-tiered cake stands held freshly cut sandwiches with assorted fillings, French pastries, melt-in-the-mouth macaroons, pretty cup cakes and mysterious spoonfuls to keep the taste buds guessing. If I had to pick a favourite, the passionfruit bavaois would be a high contender.

The combination of bone china, silver teapots and white linen turns the afternoon tea experience into a regal occasion. And, just in time for Mother's Day.

For bookings:

**Hippopotamus**

[www.hippopotamus.co.nz](http://www.hippopotamus.co.nz)

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2pm – 4.30pm Wednesday to Sunday

Paper excerpts left and above: The Star, Issue 4786, 28 October 1893, Page 3.  
Right: The Star, Issue 8716, 1 September 1906, Page 3. Both accessed at <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz>