

Tea Master Joel Belouet

Foreword: Passion for tea in luxury hotels

With a first focus on hospitality, my career started many years ago, more precisely in 1967 in Orleans, France. After gathering experience from many places, my path took me to Germany, where in 1974 I joined the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski in Munich. Being part of the bar team, I shortly became one of the loved personalities who served big names such as Queen Silvia of Sweden, Jacques Chirac, Aga Khan and many others. Slowly the art of tea gathered my whole attention, and passionately I shared this with several guests. Dedicating my time to discover everything there is to know about tea, my journey began. Traveling to Sri Lanka, where I received a “Tea Master Gold” certification, during an intense study in the origin, fabrication, preparation and storage of tea as well as how to correctly savour the aromas, the information I was seeking was discovered (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Tea Master Joel Belouet.

Source: Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski Munich

I have shared with my guests from the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski Munich my experience of over 45 years of preparing, serving, and enjoying tea. Recommending a guest the perfect tea is a delicate and attentive matter. The tea sort needs to fit the guests' mood. Only in this way can the guest enjoy a classic afternoon tea. Regarding my personal preferences, Earl Grey tea with scones, clotted cream, and orange mar-

malade must be the favourite. And if you might ask, lemon is poison to tea. And for a sweet tea flavour, white rock candy is recommended, but not normal white sugar, and definitely not any kind of (artificial) sweetener.

Pursuing further, even though I have met well-known figures from politics, business, and Hollywood sectors, I would always miss the discussions and exchanges with the regular guests. The trust put in me has always filled me with pride. The lobby of the hotel might be the largest tearoom of Munich, where 30 different varieties of tea can be enjoyed. From black to green, from herbal to fruit, everything can be found. Nevertheless, from a professional perspective, fruit or herbal tea cannot be counted as tea; we might better call it “infusion.”

After nearly 50 years of service dedicated to tea in the lobby of the Hotel Vier Jahreszeiten Kempinski Munich, I am still passionate about tea, tea service, and watching guests enjoying tea. Tea makes people calm and friendly, they relax and seize the day – more than with other beverages. Therefore, it is my pleasure to see this book about European tea culture and hospitality, combining these two distinctive elements that mean so much to me, and finally being part of such an amazing project. I am happy to see the varieties of tea cultures in different parts of Europe, the links between tea, signature products, and food pairings as well as impressive tea venues or tea related artworks.

Again, I feel confirmed in my conviction that tea is much more than only a beverage; it should be seen as an enriching cultural heritage connecting people and offering space for peace and harmony. Following this approach, this book will be profitable for all tea related or interested readers, such as lecturers, students, and tea lovers, as well as all people involved in tea culture in hospitality.

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