

## Stamford Plaza Email Correspondence 2014 High Tea Issue

Tue, Jan 14, 2014

To The General Manager,  
Phillipe Kronberg

Re: Disappointing High Tea (Traditional Morning Tea)

Recently (Dec 30) I had your Morning Tea on the Terrace in celebration of my birthday, with my sister-in-law & mother, who was visiting from Sydney.

I am a coeliac, and thus had requested a gluten free version for myself. My mother & sister-in-law had the regular morning tea. I have felt to provide feedback as I was so disappointed with the GF choices, and really quite amazed at the selection I received.

When a girl goes to a 'High Tea', it is all about the elegance...the tiered stand, the dainty sandwiches, the beautiful tiny pastries & cakes, and the crockery.

We are not there just to have something to eat for sustenance, it is ALL about the experience.

This understanding seems to be completely lost in the transfer to the GF option.

Firstly, it was not served on a tiered stand, so immediately I felt 'second rate' to the beautiful 3-tiered stand my companions were served.

But that was the least of my journey that morning re feeling completely second rate...not worth the same effort. I was presented with a plate of very ordinary cakes...the type of GF cakes that for many years at cafes around Brisbane were the only option coeliacs could ever find...a cold friand (who eats friands cold?!), a macaron (which was OK, & these are pretty if served nicely), a boring choc slice...& I can't remember what else as I didn't bother even having a nibble. The presentation was so plain...there was no beautifully crafted frosting, decoration etc...it was certainly not presented as " **an exquisite selection of dainty delights, all freshly prepared by Stamford's international team of pastry chefs**", which my lucky companions did receive.

Their selection was beautiful & showed a lot of love...mine looked like someone was annoyed to have had to have prepared a GF option, slapped together with what was available...and it made me feel like I was a second rate diner...coeliacs have to just 'make do'.

The only item that looked as though it was especially prepared for the occasion was a savoury pastry that was on another tray, which was quite nice.

The rest of this tray, however, had me astonished.

It was a wooden tray (not High Tea presentation in anyone's definition), and apart from the nice pastry, had a tossed salad & a very ordinary fruit salad that looked as though it had been left over from lunch the previous day. WHO has salad & fruit salad for morning tea, let alone a HIGH Tea??!!

Now, let me put this visit in context.

I had the pleasure of dining at the Terrace restaurant early in December for your Christmas Buffet. I loved it, and all the sauces were GF, so I was thrilled. I thought well done Stamford Plaza for looking after coeliacs so well. It was my first time in your hotel, & I thought it was beautiful. I loved the Terrace restaurant, & went home determined to be back, and keen to find an excuse to stay there when I could.

So, the first opportunity was in celebration of my birthday, & I booked the High Tea.

I later heard from a coeliac friend that she had been disappointed with the GF options of the High Tea on the Terrace, which she had had about 6 months earlier.

I thought I loved the setting so much, surely it would be nice enough. I also thought the standard of the hotel (5 star) would signify that a significant effort would be made.

I was wrong. The inappropriateness of the GF High Tea significantly impacted the experience for me.

I had stayed at the 5 star Mandarin Oriental in Bangkok 18 months prior and had been blown away by the GF food they prepared for me...starting with a complimentary GF amazing gateau style cake that was exquisite

(photo attached). When we had dinner at their Thai restaurant, all 14 courses were replicated in a beautifully presented GF version...I felt just as special as my husband who was eating from the usual menu. Sadly this commitment to quality & dedication to 'experience' regardless of eating requirements was not replicated at your establishment.

I mentioned my disappointment re GF option to the matre d when we were leaving. He explained that he had had feedback that coeliacs didn't like the GF versions of the sandwiches, and they went for a different option & you can't please everyone (he said all this nicely...just summarising). I would venture to think that maybe, judging by the lack of effort with the cakes, your sandwiches were just not nice. I can source beautifully soft GF bread from supermarkets now (Bergen), a fabulous GF herbed mayonnaise from Woolies (Birch & Waite) & actually went home & made myself delicious chicken & mayo finger sandwiches as I was so hungry still. And in no-ones version of a High Tea, is a Tapas-style version of food appropriate...that is NOT High Tea (especially not in the morning).

Lack of sandwiches aside, that does not explain why there was such a total lack of care with the choice & decoration of the sweet 'treats'. GF cakes can be fabulous, especially if a fine pastry chef is deployed to decorate them with gorgeous touches as applied to the cakes my companions received. If versions which can be frozen are chosen (I understand the lower volume of need causes problems), then why would you not?

Not since the late 90s have I had to endure such an insult to my culinary needs as a Coeliac...it is no longer the era of orange-almond slice or friand as our only GF options...there are SO many cafes around Brisbane that have beautiful & tasty GF cakes/slices on offer.

Remember that the friends of coeliacs try to find establishments where their GF friend will be catered for, so if we are not happy with the food, our friends won't be dining in your establishment either. And, the GF 'word of mouth' network is huge...if you stand out from the crowd, word will spread fast.

I write all of this because obviously it really effects me when I am made to feel as though 'I am not worth the effort'. I paid the same amount as my companions & expected the same commitment from the Stamford to make this a fantastic dining experience for me.

Your promo on the web page was not honoured for coeliacs.

Kind regards,

**Jane Thompson**

On Fri, Oct 3, 2014 at 7:53 AM, Simon Gordon <[SimonGordon@spb.stamford.com.au](mailto:SimonGordon@spb.stamford.com.au)> wrote:  
Good morning Jane

Thank you for your email regarding your disappointing experience last December and my sincere apologies for Stamford Plaza not responding sooner. The property today, as it did in January, immediately investigates and takes all customer dissatisfaction extremely seriously with reviews and discussions at great length which take place with associated departments. This process is in place so we can immediately examine our performance whilst back up rosters and managers can be consulted. Having looked into the comments you raised it is clear we had taken the feedback and implemented changes and made improvements at that time, unfortunately this was not communicated to the most important person in the process our valued customer. Apologise Jane

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Our Head Pastry Chef [REDACTED] has provided the following comments

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, 29 September 2014 9:07 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Disappointing High Tea & after sales service

Good morning All,

I can only apologize on behalf of the team for this guest not being satisfied with our offerings. As of January this year we have rolled out a complete new range of gluten free products which is inclusive of all new sweets, scones and Bergin bread and Gluten free Quiches - to which we have received great feedback from guests so far. If there is anything we can do for this guest, Please let us know. Gluten free Savoury items from the kitchen are no longer served on wooden boards.

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I am confident we have made some considerable improvements in catering for our many guests with dietary requests and as part of our standing as Brisbane's leading 5 Star Hotel will continue to ensure customer satisfaction and expectations are exceeded. The comments and suggestions you have made help and remind us of our need to constantly strive and adapt to customer needs evolving and creating that 'point of difference'.

Having considered my reply and the improvements we have introduced I would welcome the opportunity for you and another invitee to experience our products and service with our compliments and provide what I hope will be a positive endorsement.

Please accept this offer as a gesture of our good will and provide me the opportunity to personally attend to your reservation. My mobile number is ██████████ or my email you have on file.

I look forward to being of service and welcoming you back to Stamford Plaza in the near future.

Warm regards  
Simon

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