

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

St. Regis shakes up status quo of bubble tea

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St Regis San Francisco x Tealeaves' Most Expensive Bubble Tea in the World. Image courtesy of St. Regis San Francisco

By STAFF REPORTS

The St. Regis San Francisco has collaborated with Tealeaves to elevate bubble tea from popular beverage to five-star luxury.

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During San Francisco Design Week June 14-22, the event was dedicated to "question everything," with exhibitors revamping tradition. Following the design expo's theme, St. Regis worked with Tealeaves, a luxury tea brand, to take something as everyday as bubble tea and "make the ordinary, extraordinary."

Teatime, luxury style

On June 22, St. Regis' executive chef Franck Desplechin presented the "Boba Teashake" to attendees of San Francisco Design Week.

While presenting the Boba Teashake, Mr. Desplechin talked about the proper techniques of blending, preparing, tasting and evaluating the perfect cup of tea. Ticketholders also were treated to a culinary demonstration and tea tasting with Tealeaves.

Bubble tea, or boba tea, is Taiwanese iced tea-based beverage with chewy tapioca pearls. First appearing in the 1980s, the drink has gained popularity around the world, but is commonly made from low-grade teas and add-ons like non-dairy creamers and artificial flavors.

"With this project, we asked ourselves, How would we reimagine bubble tea with unlimited resources and time?" said Lana Sutherland, CEO of Tealeaves, in a statement.

"The World's Most Expensive Bubble Tea project isn't about masking the ordinary with diamond-encrusted straws and gold chalices," she said. "But is a challenge for us all to elevate expectations, quality and the standards of ingredients and techniques, using bubble tea as an example – to shake up the status quo' and question everything.'"

St. Regis and Tealeaves project leverage notions of craftsmanship as it applies to the art of tea and gastronomy.

The Boba Teashake uses Tealeaves' Master Blenders Lychee Passionfruit Bubble Tea blend. The small batch tea is a combination of Indian, Chinese and Ceylon black teas that were blended by hand with natural lychee and passionfruit oils.



Tealeaves' Master Blenders Lychee Passionfruit Bubble Tea was hand-blended for the project. Image courtesy of Tealeaves

"When creating the Boba Teashake, the Lychee Passionfruit Bubble Tea blend was prepared with proper infusion times and temperature to achieve the best expression of taste and nuanced flavor, while preventing the over-extraction of bitter tannins typically found in regular, over-steeped bubble tea," said St. Regis San Francisco's Mr. Desplechin in a statement.

"We infused the tapioca pearls with Tealeaves Mountain Berry herbal blend to add an extra dimension of taste and texture, and paired it with a passionfruit coulis, sea salt caramel foam and fleur de sel," he said. "The name of the Boba Teashake is an homage to the technique of using a cocktail shaker to create the signature bubbles and cool the beverage, instead of the typical method of letting ice melt inside, which dilutes the flavor.

"We wanted to unearth bubble tea's true potential by using the highest quality ingredients and five-star culinary techniques to create something unforgettably delicious."

Mr. Desplechin and Tealeaves previously worked together on the tea blender's Tealeaves x Pantone #PaletteForYourPalate project.

Tealeaves also works to train five-star hotels and Michelin-starred chefs from around the world about the art of tea.

The recipe for the World's Most Expensive Bubble Tea can be found [here](#).

From branded afternoon teas to special-edition blends, high-end tea is often seen as a luxury commodity rather than a common beverage.

For example, British department store Fortnum & Mason shares its 300-year-old-enthusiasm for tea with a subscription service.

Fortnum & Mason began as a Piccadilly grocer and remains HRH Queen Elizabeth II's preferred retailer for stocking her personal pantry. A staple of Fortnum & Mason's food halls is its wide selection of tea blends, many of which are exclusive, and its offering of traditional Afternoon Tea service in its restaurants.

The retailer created the Tea Post with fellow tea lovers and connoisseurs in mind. The recently launched

subscription service delivers the very best of Fortnum & Mason teas right to subscribers' mailboxes ([see story](#)).

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