

## Strawberries and Cream | It's Wimbledon again

by Jochen Ressel



In the late 1990's, when I worked for a company's London HQ, our President would have loved to be British. Unfortunately his name was so clearly Swedish, that there was never any doubt that he is not. As a compensation he collected memberships of every British club you can even think of and therefore got more invitations to various events than he could handle. His secretary, an elegant British lady, forwarded all those invitations left over to members of the HQ staff who appreciated them – and I was one of them, hence enjoying numerous exclusive events and Wimbledon was one of them – including the legendary strawberries and cream served there.

### **But what has this combination to do with tennis?**

In 1877 the first Wimbledon Tennis Championship tournament took place and from the very beginning, strawberries and cream have been served. At this time, the incredible number of 200 spectators visited the Championships. But the history of the legendary combination is much older than Wimbledon.

Some historians claim that it was Thomas Wolsey, an extremely powerful figure in the court of King Henry VIII, who established the tradition in 1509, when he built Hampton Court, a palace along the riverside which still exists and where strawberries and cream were served at a banquet.

From this time on, dairy products were seen as peasant food of the upper class, but it's not passed on why the head chef served cream to the King alongside a handful of strawberries, but some guess the reason is a very practical one.

As more than 600 guests had to be served, the staff looked for a dish which is exclusive and easy to prepare at the same time. Hence, strawberries and cream were a perfect combination. Obviously, the palace had a tennis court as well, where the staff also served strawberries and cream to the spectators and some historians claim this to be the reason why the Wimbledon Tennis Championships are associated with this traditional dish.

### **What is so special about the strawberries? And to plan your Wimbledon budget...**

The strawberries are always Grade 1 from farms in Kent, and they are picked at 4:00am on the day they are sold at the tournament. To make it easier to plan your trip to the Wimbledon Tennis Championships, you should not only consider the ticket prices (from £17 on Court 18 to £200 on the Centre Court), but also reserve a budget for strawberries and cream. The merchants offer for a minimum of 10 strawberries and a lashing of cream £2.50. The hospitality packages which do not only include prime viewing seats on the Centre Court but also stunning English themed gardens, suites in luxury surroundings and private dining tables, are available from £1.300 per person – strawberries and cream included. So you can easily calculate which way you are better off – paying for each portion separately or simply booking a hospitality package.

### **Wimbledon in numbers – including strawberries and cream**

The 500,000 spectators consume on average 10,000 litres of cream and 28,000 kg of strawberries each year during the 13 days of the tournament, according to the official Wimbledon website. Additionally, 330,000 cups of tea and coffee, as well as 30,000 pizzas, 29,000 bottles of champagne and 16,000 portions of fish and chips are sold. Quite amazing, isn't it? So enjoy the broadcasts of the matches! PS: Strawberries and cream are available at the every grocery store as well...

The Austro-British Society is looking forward to your views and comments!

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#### *About the author*

**Jochen Ressel** is a Board Member of the Austro-British Society. He worked several years for a UK company and its HQ in London. Currently, he holds the position as COO of SoccerCoin, a FinTech company active in the field of sports.

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