How to Eat your way through London in 8 days or less: The Ultimate Food Guide through the Cosmopolitan City
By Brooklyn Crockton

Background

It is hard to think about London without recalling high tea or fish and chips. However, what about chicken tikka Masala? The traditionally Indian dish has been adopted by England and is now considered quintessential when discussing cuisine in London. During my brief stay in England, I decided to investigate cuisines both ethnic and traditional, and their influence to English culture.

“Can I have some more sir?”

The famous line delivered by Oliver Twist not only highlighted Oliver’s unfortunate situation, but it also shed light on food scarcity in England. Those of higher classes maintained a surplus of food, yet those who were poor were subjected to “being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it.”

Traditional English Cuisine

Upon arriving in England, I knew there were a few dishes I needed to try. Those being fish and chips, tea and crumpets, and chicken tikka masala. The first stop was the fish and chips, which I enjoyed at the Old Bank of England. Simply put, it was immaculate. Crispy, salty, and steaming hot, it was hard to ask for anything better. At the Old Bank of England, some of my peers also enjoyed traditional meals such as bangers and mash, and mince pie (looked delicious, however Sweeney Todd steered me away). Next stop on our food excursion took us to a small town outside of London called Stratford-upon-Avon, which was also the hometown of William Shakespeare. Here we enjoyed Twining’s English breakfast tea, accompanied by scones, jam and clotted cream. The final stop on the list was chicken tikka masala. I stopped by Tandoori Tavern, and enjoyed some delicious and spicy chicken tikka masala. Curry houses like this one were heavily sprinkled around London, and were a local favorite to Londoners and tourists alike.

England as an International Food Powerhouse

Along with being able to find some of the more traditional English Cuisine, I was also able to find many other ethnic restaurants, such as Italian and Cantonese cuisine. On the last day of our trip, we set out to find a traditional English breakfast. My group members and I came across a restaurant called “The Breakfast Club”, which took classic English Dishes and put a Southern American flare on it. The food was amazing and while it incorporated many other cultural influences, it stayed true to its English roots.

The popular dish made me wonder how and why the meal was considered to be so influential to the English culture. According to Britannica, “It is one of the most popular takeout dishes in Britain especially in the East End restaurants along Brick Lane”. Even though the dish is traditionally Indian, it was adapted to meet the British taste palate by adding yogurt to the spicy sauce, and putting the chicken in gravy.

Bibliography