

To: Beverley Aspinall, Fortnum & Mason
From: Bill Oddie, c/o Yvonne Taylor

Via e-mail

Dear Ms Aspinall,

I have reason to believe that you are well aware that the procedure of “fattening up” geese by force-feeding in order to accelerate the production of foie gras is banned in this and other European countries because it is considered extremely cruel. It is also totally and obviously unnatural. Which makes it doubly surprising – and shocking – to me that at a recent meeting with PETA you chose to argue your case by equating the physical experience of a goose being force-fed with that of a cormorant swallowing a fish. Catching and swallowing fish is what cormorants do. So do herons, kingfishers and various seabirds. What’s more, their throats and digestive systems allow them to consume surprisingly large prey that is not only still alive but also wiggling. This is entirely natural behaviour for cormorants and other fish-eating birds.

Geese are NOT fish eaters. In fact, their feeding mode could be described as “delicately vegetarian”. They nibble and graze on grass, seeds, short-cropped crops or mud flats. This also applies to many species of ducks, some of which also “dabble on water”. A small number of duck species dive and do sometimes catch fish, but only “tiddlers”.

There is no wild bird whose natural feeding method could be remotely equated with the insertion of metal tubing, which may pierce the bird’s throat, causing pain, fear and aberrant physical reactions.

I have no doubt that Fortnum & Mason claim to trade in the “finer things in life”. The production of foie gras is NOT a fine thing. It is unethical and uncivilised, and should be an embarrassment to those who are involved. In the UK it is illegal to “farm” foie gras, but it is not illegal to sell and eat it. This is the type of idiocy all too prevalent in legislation affecting human and animal rights. However – to quote a truism – there is no point in providing a product when there is no demand. By providing an outlet and a market, Fortnum & Mason is guilty of condoning a shameful act of cruelty.

Until you withdraw foie gras from your shelves you will surely attract the adverse publicity you deserve, especially as you may well become isolated as one of the very few establishments supplying it.

“Fortnum & Mason – You Can Taste the Cruelty.”

Bill Oddie

Supporting PETA, Compassion in World Farming, OneKind and the RSPCA.