

## Afternoon Tea Party: Fun Tips

The word "party" means different things to different people. It can be a quiet backyard barbecue, an evening soiree with live music, or even an afternoon get-together with tea as the main attraction.

When you're invited to an afternoon tea party, you can expect pleasure and enjoyment in the company of friends. These are simple but elegant affairs reminiscent of the classic English afternoon tea parties when fine ladies and gentlemen would gather to celebrate in style.

The traditional English tea party is sometimes seen as a social gathering held in a formal or stuffy atmosphere. Typically served between 3 o'clock and 5 o'clock, an English afternoon tea party was originally developed to suit the lifestyle of the British aristocracy. Elegant and fashionable, English afternoon tea parties were held in the highest esteem. Guests would be treated to delicious teas, sandwiches and desserts. Tables were set with the finest silver and fine bona china, with serving essentials including tea trays, cake stands, servers, tea caddies, tea strainers and of course, proper cups, saucers and teapots.

As the years progressed, the British lifestyle changed, and the formal afternoon tea party began to wane in popularity. In recent years, however, there has been a revival of the Afternoon English tea party. People are once again appreciating the simple elegance and fashion that an afternoon tea party can provide. Cream Teas have become a popular event, where groups of friends gather to enjoy a steaming pot of tea served with rich pastries, cream and jam.

If you're planning to host an afternoon tea party, be sure to offer a proper menu. Sandwiches and pastries are the most common fare, but you may also set out English crumpets, muffins, cakes, cookies, biscuits, gingerbread and bread with butter. Your table may also be graced with elegant pots and jars containing jams, jellies, preserves, creams and lemon curd. Regardless of the foods offered, be sure that your guests have plenty of fine tea to enjoy.

No afternoon tea party is complete without a fine English teapot. You can add variety to your table by serving tea in several beautiful teapots. As the host or hostess, you will pour the tea and serve the food. Your guests will be seated around the table, or in armchairs situated about the room. There should be a table close by for every guest to rest his or her refreshments, with ample room for cup and saucer, plate, napkin and cutlery. Be sure that your guests are comfortable so that they can fully enjoy their afternoon tea party experience.

An English afternoon tea party is a fun way to meet with your friends and family. Just a few simple details will ensure a relaxing and enjoyable gathering for everyone on your guest list.