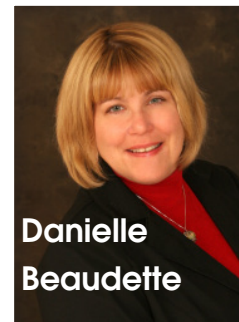


Tea Party Entertaining

By Danielle Beaudette



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Plan a tea-themed party for your next gathering.

The types of themes are endless! Remember those delightful times as a child at tea parties with your friends and favorite teddies?

Why not continue those charming times as an adult? Invite friends and family, and have them bring along a guest to form new relationships.

Plan a tea party with a theme.

Tea parties aren't just for bridal showers or baby showers any more. It can be a themed party such as a Literary Tea, Back to School Tea, Harvest Tea or as simple as a Day off with Friends Tea. Be creative! Once you have chosen a list of 8-12 people, determine the date, time and location of the party. We recommend keeping the guest list small in order to accommodate seating comfortably, and allow for the conversation to be shared by everyone. The invitations can be formal or plain. Hand-written invitations on pretty tea cards are elegant, but they can also be made



with card stock from a local craft store that incorporates the party theme. In today's electronic era, email is an option, however, the purpose of the tea party is to slow down and take time with friends, so we recommend personal invitations to set the stage for the pleasurable tea party ahead. Be sure to include the address of the party location and directions, an RSVP date, telephone number and a request for any dietary requests



(gluten-free, etc.). If the location of the party is at a tea room, confirm the reservations two weeks ahead of time. Mail the invitations three weeks prior to the date so the guests can plan their calendars accordingly.

Next choose the menu. This is where the creativity is endless, especially if a themed tea is planned.

The menu can be difficult or easy. Spending hours in the kitchen the day before will leave you tired the day of the party, so careful menu planning is important. The menu can include savories (scones, tea breads, muffins), tea sandwiches (egg & chive, turkey and arugula, smoked salmon), and sweets (berry tarts, lemon bars, chocolate cake). If planning a



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themed party, choose foods that complement

the theme, or let the type of tea being served determine the menu. Have fun with it! If teas from India are your preference, offer all Indian teas and prepare foods from India. As the host, preparing the full menu is proper etiquette, but if the attendees insist on participating in the cooking, it is acceptable to offer them one of the dishes to prepare.



An option is to have a surprise menu where you could set the theme and designate a savory, sandwich or dessert for each person to bring. Printing

out the menu on plain or stylish paper and placing on the plate at each place setting is always recommended. This allows the guest to know which foods to choose on the 3-tiered tray, without having to interrupt the table discussion. It is also fun to add a tea quote to the bottom of the menu that corresponds to the theme.

The featured menu item is the tea.

so using good quality loose-leaf teas and providing the proper utensils is important. The tea should be prepared correctly to produce the best flavor in the cup. Each country has a unique way of brewing tea. We recommend the following instructions for the proper cup of tea. Begin by pouring boiling water in the tea pot and letting it sit for a minute or two, then pour it out. This will warm the pot and keep the tea from cooling too quickly. Add 2-3 tsp. of loose tea to the infuser or natural tea filter depending on the size of the teapot. Prepare the water by heating it to the correct tem-



perature for the tea type being served. If you don't have a temperature controlled kettle, use these guidelines: slow water movement in the kettle for green and white tea, quick movement for oolong tea and boiling water for black tea and herbals. The steeping time for white, green, oolong, and black teas is different and should be followed carefully to prevent a bitter taste in the cup. An easy guideline



is: white tea 4-5 minutes, green tea 2-3 minutes, oolong tea 1-2 minutes, black tea 4-5 minutes, and herbals 5-7 minutes. Fol-

lowing these simple steps will produce a fantastic cup of tea that your attendees will long remember.

Many people prefer to drink their tea without additives, but you should be prepared to offer lemon for black teas, milk and sugar. Decorative sugar cubes are an elegant touch. In today's conventional society, it is up to the host to decide if they would like to pour the tea for each person, or simply place the variety of teas on each table for the guests to serve themselves. It is not uncommon to have a dedicated tea table for the teapots and accoutrements so those invited can help themselves. For those guests that are not tea drinkers, you may consider offering alternative beverages on this table. This allows each person to choose their beverage freely.



Setting the table can be simple or elaborate.

The standard for tea parties is always china place settings with silver and linens. If you prefer to keep it simple, paper plates and napkins are acceptable; however good quality paper




Decorating for the tea party is an option.

If you decide to decorate for the theme, make sure it is not overdone. The focus should be on gathering with friends and family. Use decorations that add to the ambiance of the tea. A centerpiece on the table always promotes a good conversation. It can go along with the theme or simply be fresh flowers charmingly arranged. A lovely tea basket filled with tea-type products such as lemon curd and scone mix, jellies, teaspoons, tea cups, tea travel mugs, tongs, and sugars makes a heartfelt arrangement. Or a small glass bowl filled with colored water and a floating tea light can offer a tranquil setting. It is important



longer than 10 minutes, otherwise the guests will lose interest. If having games, small prizes are recommended for the winners. These can be easily attainable at any local gift store, and should not be overly elaborate. Create a quick game at the end of the party to offer the centerpiece to the winner. The most important part of the tea party is to enjoy the company. During the planning process, don't plan so much that you will be too busy to enjoy yourself. Incorporate plenty of time to re-live those memorable tea parties of childhood!

For more information about Danielle read her bio on page 16 or call 603-249-9111. For more Tea Party ideas, information and her full list of tea offerings, scones flavors & clotted cream visit her website at www.TheCozyTeaCart.com. 

goods with colors to match the theme are recommended. Real silverware vs. plasticware is suggested for any type of tea party. If offering a more sophisticated tea party, place card holders with hand-written cards, favors, and wine glasses with water and lemon, are a graceful touch at each place setting. Wrap samples of the tea being served with ribbon to make an informal favor. Or choose a variety of teas from around the world and place them in a linen bag for amore fashionable favor.

that the centerpiece is no larger than 6-8 inches high, so that those sitting can see over it and it is not a distraction. Background music is a beautiful accompaniment to the party. Choose music that goes along with the theme or classical music for a conventional setting. The music should be kept low to add to the atmosphere and not interfere with conversation.

Party activities can be a fun part of a tea party,

depending on the time and space available. Keep the activities informal; limit them to one or two, and no