




ROYAL ALBERT
ENGLAND 1904

Afternoon Tea Tips



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1. The History of Royal Albert

Royal Albert is synonymous with grace, elegance, romance and is unashamedly inspired by the English country garden. The success of Royal Albert dates back to 1896 when Thomas Clarke Wild, along with his father, purchased the Albert Works in Longton, one of the 6 towns that make up Stoke-on-Trent. The factory was given its title to commemorate the birth a year earlier of Prince Albert and in 1906 the company name Royal Albert Limited was registered.

The company soon became famous for its bone china tea and breakfast sets featuring floral motifs and rich patterns. In 1897 Thomas Wild & Co produced a range of commemorative pieces for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, an association with royalty that continues to this day.

A flexible and progressive approach to products and manufacturing drove much of the success of the Royal Albert brand internationally. In 1910 the company began exporting to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. And Royal Albert was one of the very first in its field to install kilns fired by gas and electricity.

In 1962 the world famous Old Country Roses pattern was launched which continues to be extremely popular today. Since its launch, over one hundred million pieces of Old Country Roses have been sold worldwide.



2. History of Tea Drinking & Afternoon Tea

According to Chinese legend, Emperor Shen Nung accidentally discovered tea 5000 years ago in 2737 BC. Shen Nung was boiling water, as was the practice before drinking it, when a gust of wind blew some leaves from the tree he was sitting under into the pot. The result was a pleasant new beverage, which was a great improvement on boiled water! The tree was a *Camellia sinensis* – this is the same species from which tea is grown today.

There are thousands of types of tea available nowadays – they all come from the same species – but the different flavours and characteristics are a result of different soils, climates, altitudes and processing techniques.



History of Tea Drinking & Afternoon Tea cont...

Around 1840 it is believed that Anna, the Duchess of Bedford began the elaborate social ritual of afternoon tea served at 5pm. A cup of tea served with a light refreshment of bread & butter and cake sustained her and saved her from “that sinking feeling” that overcame her between luncheon and dinner.

Other social hostesses soon caught on to this concept with the practice becoming respectable enough to be moved (from the boudoir) to the drawing room and before long a new social institution was born.

Women would dress up for the occasion and gather at a home where the finest of china and silverware were presented as a show of success and stature.

By the late 1800s afternoon tea had become one of the major institutions of English country house life and was often attended by both men and women. Ladies dressed especially for the occasion and their china reflected the colours in fashion!





History of Tea Drinking & Afternoon Tea cont...

The expression 'high tea' is attributed to the nineteenth century English Midlands, an industrial area. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution a century earlier, shopkeepers began trading till 9pm to accommodate for late shopping workers. Dinner was served after the shops closed. To remove a feeling of hunger workers took tea around 6pm. There were no sandwiches or pastries like afternoon tea, instead it would include bread, cheese, pickles, cold meats, leftovers and tea. Because this tea was taken at a dining table (high table) rather than a coffee or low tea table, it began to be called "high" tea.

In recent years the term "high tea" has become a term used to describe an elaborate afternoon tea, much like the traditional English afternoon tea. The term "high" in this case refers to social formality rather than the height of the table the tea is served on.

Today tea, in its many different forms, is enjoyed around the world. It is second only to water as the world's most consumed drink!

3. Table Settings and Essential Accoutrements

For the perfect afternoon tea table setting follow our essential accoutrements recommendations below.

Essential Items:



Teacup, Saucer, Plate & Teaspoon

Ensure you have a teacup, saucer, plate and teaspoon for each of your guests. On the table, the plate should be placed first on the table and used for cakes, sandwiches or any other treats you are serving. The teacup and saucer are then placed on top of the plate. The saucer's function is to hold the teacup in place when not in use. Teaspoons should rest across the saucer behind the teacup while not in use.



Teapot & Tea Strainer

Depending on the number of guests and the number of types of tea you wish to serve you may need more than 1 teapot. As a guide most teapots will hold between 3 and 4 teacups.



Sugar Bowl & Spoon

Ensure a sugar bowl and spoon are part of your setting so guests can add according to their preference.



Cream/ Milk Jug

You can either put cream or milk in a jug for guests. Milk should never be poured straight from the carton into guest's tea.

Table Settings and Essential Accoutrements cont...

Depending on your choice of afternoon treats the following items may be useful:

Other Useful Items:



Tiered Cake Stand

Can be used for miniature, bite sized sweet and savoury treats that take your fancy.



Cake Plate

Can be used for cakes or other desserts.



Sandwich Tray

Use to artfully display sandwiches. Make sure to cut the crusts of the sandwiches and cut into triangles.



Sugar & Cream Jug Tray

This tray is used to display the sugar bowl and cream/ milk jug on the table.

Vase and Freshly Cut Flowers

A welcome addition to the afternoon tea table, freshly cut flowers carefully arranged in a vase add elegance and atmosphere. Remember to use a low sitting vase so that guests can see each other over the arrangement.



4. How to Make the Perfect Cup of Tea

How you brew your tea is ultimately down to personal taste and specific leaves keep, so experiment with the following guidelines to find out what works best for you.

1. Use fresh, high quality loose leaf tea. Tea should be kept in an airtight container to keep it fresh.
2. Use fresh water – always empty the kettle and fill it with cold water. Hot or reheated water contains less oxygen and gives a flat, stale taste.
3. Use a clean china teapot – teapots hold temperatures at a high level and don't allow flavours and aromas to escape. If the teapot is stained with tannin, two big spoons of bicarb soda and boiling water will remove the stains in 2-3 hours.
4. Warm your teapot – fill your teapot with hot water and empty it just before making the tea. By warming the pot you are not subjecting the pot to sudden changes in temperature and the temperature of the tea will be maintained.
5. Use the right amount of tea – the traditional guide is one spoon per person and 'one for the pot'. If you prefer stronger tea, use more tea, as opposed to brewing for longer.

How to Make the Perfect Cup of Tea cont...

6. Water should be just brought to a full boil – If the water does not reach a full boil, half the leaves in the pot will float. To achieve good body and flavour, they should all be on the bottom once the tea has brewed. On the other hand, if water is allowed to continue boiling, there will be less oxygen in the water and the tea made from it will taste flat.
7. Brewing time is critical – Pour in the boiling water and put the lid on straight away. Let the tea brew for 3 – 5 minutes, depending on the size of the tea leaves being used (smaller leaves require less time).
8. To ensure good flavour stir before serving. Some people turn the pot three times one way and three times the other, which does the same job.
9. Serve straight away. Tea will taste stewed if left in the pot for more than 10 minutes.
10. Milk before tea, or tea before milk? According to the British Standards Institute, milk comes first, otherwise it is scalded and this affects the taste. Scientifically, tea added to milk caramelises the lactose in the milk giving a richer, milkier flavour. However, Buckingham Palace sources say Queen Elizabeth pours tea first and then adds milk. When you add milk is really a matter of personal taste.

5. Etiquette and Manners

At all events simple etiquette applies. Good manners go far beyond the table and leave a lasting impression.

Remember these important points at your next High Tea function:

1. Pick up your cup and saucer together - holding the saucer in one hand and cup in the other.
2. Never leave your spoon in the cup and be sure not to sip your tea from the spoon either.
3. After stirring, place your spoon quietly on the saucer, behind the cup, on the right hand side under the handle.
4. Contrary to popular belief, the ring and pinkie fingers should not be extended, but should rest by curving gently back toward your wrist.





Etiquette and Manners cont...

5. If using lemon, lemon slices should be neatly placed in the teacup after tea has been poured.
6. Never add lemon with milk, as the citric acid will cause the milk to curdle.
7. Take small bites. Never stuff the whole sandwich or dessert in your mouth even though it seems small enough.
8. Never dip a scone in jam or cream. Pretend it is a dinner roll. Break off bite size pieces and add the jam or cream in your own plate. Scones are not to be eaten with a fork.
9. Be sure to unfold your napkin and place it in your lap. Leave your napkin on the chair, not the table, if you must leave the table.

Etiquette and manners tips taken from:

<http://jumptheq.com.au/articles/high-tea-etiquette>

<http://www.homelife.com.au/food/763/tea+tips+and+etiquette>