

# Afternoon Tea

## TIMELINE



*The day before or in the morning...*

### **Set the table**

- Choose a clean, comfortable spot, ideally with enough space for a table or tables. Arrange the table(s) with tablecloths, teacups, saucers, teaspoons and plates.
- Set out napkins, spoons, and small knives and forks for scones and pastries.
- Add glassware such as water glasses, wine glasses / Champagne coupes or flutes (if using)
- Set up decorations / theming
- Add menus and place cards (if using)
- If space is tight, set up a side table with a cloth to hold items like teapots, extra food, or take home gifts.
- Leave space for floral arrangements

### **Set-up in the kitchen (or somewhere close by)**

- Sugar bowl(s), milk jug(s), tea strainers(s), tongs and any small dishes for condiments
- Afternoon tea stand(s) and platter(s) for the scones, pastries, and cakes (if applicable)
- Small, decorative trays for sandwiches and savouries.
- Water jugs
- If you are serving a cocktail, set up glasses, jugs, garnishes, etc.

*Two hours before your guests arrive...*

### **Get dressed**

- This might seem like a small detail, but it's one that can make a big difference! After all the effort you've put into planning, don't let yourself be rushed on the day.

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### *One hour before guests arrive...*

- Place your floral arrangement(s) on the table(s).
- Wrap your scones in a foil package ready for reheating. Set aside on a tray in the kitchen.
- Turn on heating / air-conditioning if appropriate.
- Do a final check of the table(s).
- Attend to anything that may have arisen that you didn't plan for.

### *Thirty minutes before guests arrive...*

- Arrange the food. *Wear an apron so you don't ruin your outfit.*
- You don't have to put all your food out at once. Hold some back so you can refresh the trays/plates/stands as necessary.
- Preheat the oven for any hot savouries and the scones (160 C fan / 320 F)
- Place a mix of sandwiches on the bottom level of a tiered stand as well as on a sandwich plate. Arrange aesthetically, ensuring that guests can easily access them. Cover the sandwiches as best you can with sheets of damp paper/kitchen towel so they don't dry out.
- Leave the middle layer of the tiered stand empty for warm scones.
- Arrange any sweet treats on the top level of your tiered stands. Place extra sweet treats on decorative platters. **LEAVE IN THE KITCHEN FOR NOW.**
- Leave an empty tray or plate for warm savouries if serving.
- Have close by decorative bowls and linen napkins for extra scones.
- Place cream, jam, (or other toppings) for the scones, and any other condiments (dipping sauces etc) in assigned dishes and bowls. Place on the table.
- Add water to the jugs (if using). Place on the table.
- Add fresh milk to the jug(s) and sugar to the bowl(s) – don't forget a spoon. Place on the table.

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*Thirty minutes before guests arrive (continued)...*

- Put lemon slices (if using) in a small dish and place on the table.
- Put on background music.
- REMOVE THE APRON – hide it somewhere out of sight.

### **- GUESTS ARRIVE -**

- Greet guests
- Offer a cocktail / wine / soft drink then ask guests to be seated.
- Wrap the scones in foil and place in the oven. Set a timer for 10 minutes.
- Place any hot savouries on a tray in the oven. Reheat as per recipe instructions.
- Prepare the tea by following the brewing instructions for your chosen tea. See my post on How to Make Tea.
- Go around the table and pour the tea. Leave room for milk or lemon if desired.
- Place the teapot on the table with a coaster underneath or on a sideboard or return it to the kitchen.
- Remember to offer another round of tea or make a fresh pot if required.

### **Serve the food**

- Remove the damp paper towels from the sandwiches on both the tiered stand and the sandwich plate.
- Take the sandwich plate to the table, but NOT the tiered stand.
- Remove the scones from the oven. Undo the foil and place some on the middle layer of the tiered stand and the rest in a bowl lined with a clean linen napkin. Cover the scones with the napkin to keep warm.
- Take the tiered stand to the table. Return and take the scones in the bowl to the table. Tell your guests there are extra scones in the bowl and jam and cream on the table.

cont....

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### **Serve the food (continued)**

- Remove savouries from the oven (if serving) and place them on a plate/platter. Take to the table.
- Suggest guests start with the sandwiches and savouries, then follow with the scones and finish with the cakes.
- Allow guests to help themselves.
- Sit down and eat!

### **Refill the tea / drinks**

- Brew more tea if required and pass around the teapot
- Offer more wine / water / soft drinks etc.

### **Refresh the food**

- When a plate, platter or even the tiered stand is half-full, take it to the kitchen and re-fill as required. Return it to the table.
- Check the milk jugs, water jug, jams and condiments and top up / refresh if necessary.

### **Relax and enjoy your event**

A successful afternoon tea is an opportunity to relax while enjoying delicious food and good conversation. Allow your guests to take their time enjoying the tea and treats, and make sure you take some time to enjoy the food and company too.

### **Thank guests**

As the tea time comes to an end, thank your guests for their company. Offer them a gift to take home as a memento of the day (optional).