



## Tea Time Etiquette

- ♥ A proper invitation will educate guests about what to expect and prepare for, not simply the time and place.
- ♥ White linen napkins are preferable for a formal tea.
- ♥ Curtains should be drawn (closed) if candles are lit during the day.
- ♥ If you must leave the table and plan to return, place the napkin on the seat of your chair. When everyone has finished tea, the hostess signals the end of teatime by placing her napkin loosely to the left of her plate.
- ♥ Never put your napkin back on the table until you are ready to leave. The napkin stays in your lap!
- ♥ The hostess guest of honor, if there is one, should not be stuck in the kitchen, but should be mingling and entertaining her guests while some special friends share the duties of “pourer.”
- ♥ No pourer should be at her station for more than thirty minutes. She should fill the cup  $\frac{3}{4}$  full and then ask, “Would you like sugar? One lump or two?” (always use cubed sugar) since sugar naturally dissolves better in warmer tea. Then ask if they would also like milk or lemon—NEVER milk and lemon together since lemon curdles milk. Serve milk with tea rather than cream that would react with the acidity in tea and mask the flavor.
- ♥ Ideally, serve lemon in thin slices that float in the cup. If using wedges, provide a small lemon fork to squeeze lemon, then an extra saucer or bowl for discarded rind. Avoid floating large pieces of lemon in the cup.

- ♥ Blot lipstick before drinking, to avoid leaving lip prints on the teacup or linens.
- ♥ Once the tea has been poured if guests are seated and must wait to be served, refreshments should be on their table in three-tiered platters (savories on bottom, scones in the middle, and sweets on top) or presented on silver trays in courses: savories, scones, and sweets in that order.
- ♥ Hold your teacup by its handle, using a bent index finger and thumb to “pinch” the handle. Unlike the grasp used with a coffee mug, never push your finger through the handle of your teacup.
- ♥ Pinkies up!
- ♥ Gently swish the tea back and forth when stirring. Never leave your spoon upright in the cup and likewise, never sip from the spoon. After stirring, return the spoon quietly to the saucer, placing it quietly behind the cup. It should be on the righthand side of the saucer, behind the handle of the cup.
- ♥ If you are served hot water and a teabag, allow the tea bag to rest in the water for about five minutes. Avoid dunking the bag (which doesn’t help the steeping process anyway) and remove the teabag before drinking your tea.
- ♥ If you are standing or are seated away from a table, use both hands to raise the saucer with the cup until near your face. Lift the cup to your mouth only when the saucer will remain a fairly short distance from the cup. If you are seated at a dining table, you may leave the saucer on the table.
- ♥ Remember that tea is to be sipped, not slurped and not used to wash down a large bite of food. Swallow your food before you sip your tea.
- ♥ One should always try a little of each course.
- ♥ Never talk with food in your mouth. That is why it is important to take dainty bites.
- ♥ When eating scones, follow the rules of eating any bread, taking only small bites at a time, with a small dollop of jam first, topped with cream.
- ♥ Once you have used your utensils, it is impolite to put them back on the table or to re-use them to serve yourself more of the jam or cream. Instead, rest utensils on the side of your plate.
- ♥ To the best of your ability, stay seated throughout the teatime.
- ♥ Remember to say “please” and “thank you”!

