



Afterschool Tea Activity

What is Afternoon Tea?

The Duchess of Bedford started Afternoon Tea in 1840. She would get hungry in late afternoon and ask for tea with bread and butter. The Duchess enjoyed her snack so much that she began to invite friends to join her. Her friends liked it too. Soon Afternoon Tea became popular in Great Britain.

What began as a snack turned into a small meal. It included finger sandwiches, little cakes, and sweet biscuits called "scones." People liked to use fancy teacups, teapots, creamers, and sugar bowls. That made Afternoon Tea feel special. Below is one of the Barnum family's teacups. Next to it is their silver teaspoon holder. You can also see a pretty tea strainer from 1845. It is like a tiny basket with holes in the bottom. There were no tea bags back then. Instead, people put loose tea leaves in the teapot and added boiling water. Then they poured the tea through a strainer to keep the leaves out of the teacups.



Barnum Museum



Barnum Museum



Metropolitan Museum of Art

What is a Tea Cozy?

When something is cozy, it keeps you warm. A tea cozy (or "cosy" in Great Britain) is a thick cover that keeps the tea inside a teapot warm. Tea cozies became popular in Great Britain and the United States during the 1800s. Back then houses could be very chilly in winter. The tea got cold quickly!

The Barnum family's tea cozy was decorated with bright red needlework and lots of tiny beads. Most tea cozies were much simpler, though. Some were like quilts. Some were knitted, like sweaters for teapots! You used a handle at the top to pull the cozy off. Then you were ready to pour the tea. Look closely to see the twisted cord handle at the top of Barnum's tea cozy.





Plan an Afterschool Tea

Raise your hand if you are starving by the time you get home from school! That is actually the perfect time of day to have afternoon tea. Not everybody has a teapot and teacups. So we will call this "Afterschool Tea" instead. Invite a small number of guests—family members, friends, or your own special dolls or stuffed toys.

- Set the table with your fanciest cups, plates, and napkins. Add a pretty table decoration if you like!
- Make sandwiches—look at our list for ideas. Cut them into bite-size triangles, circles, or rectangles, removing the crust edges. Ask for an adult's help to be safe when cutting.
- Put them on a fancy plate, and add a few sweet treats like cookies, cupcakes or fruit. Put the plate in the middle of your table.
- Ask an adult to help you make fruity caffeine-free tea. Or you can pour your favorite drink into a fancy cup.
- Before you sit down, make sure your guests have been served with tea. Remember, your guests come first!
- Then sit down and pass the plate of goodies to your guests before helping yourself.
- Now it's time to sip your tea, eat, and talk! Find out how the day has gone for each of your guests, and then share your own story. Enjoy your Afterschool Tea!



Afternoon Tea Sandwiches

Egg Salad

Ham and Cheese

Cucumber Slices and Butter

Cheese and Bread & Butter Pickles

Peanut Butter and Jelly

