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A Guide to The Perfect Christmas Afternoon Tea

Nothing says 'let's go all out' quite like the Great British Afternoon Tea. Famously known as the quaintest way of toasting to a special occasion, you know you're in for a treat whenever there's a tiered cake stand bearing bite sized portions of your favourite snacks involved. If there's one thing the nation can agree on, it's that afternoon tea and the people you love go together like jam and clotted cream. The order in which they go on, however, may divide some people. We're staying out of it...

Come Christmas, afternoon teas are often shunned aside in favour of supersized buffets and 'picky dinners' consisting of cold pigs in blankets, slabs of cheese, and the token celery stick that never ends up getting a look in. While you might associate dainty scones and floral teapots with balmy long al fresco lunches, afternoon tea is just as fitting for the festive period as it is for the summertime.

Not only that, but it's also surprisingly easy to replicate your favourite miniature banquet at home. Sure, going to a fancy tearoom for all your cucumber sandwich cravings is great – especially if they cut the crusts off for you – but it also makes for quite the costly trip. So why not channel your inner Mary Berry and make this Christmas your classiest yet? (Ahem, that's until the Bailey's comes out, at least...)

In this guide, we're sharing Teapig's top tips for the perfect Christmas Afternoon Tea, plus the perfect teas to pair each mini mouthful with:

- **Next level sandwiches**
- **Something savoury**
- **Sweeten up treats**
- **Scones to salivate**
- **Teapig's top tips for the perfect Christmas Afternoon Tea**

Got your pinky at the ready? Spiffing. Read ahead as we 'bake' it all down for you, so you can treat your family and friends to an afternoon tea to remember this Christmas. No sad celery included.

Next level sandwiches

Don't get us wrong, we love a slap-up sarnie just as much as the next person – especially if it involves copious amounts of ketchup on a Sunday morning. There's a time and place for that sarnie of sorts. But it is not one for afternoon tea. Oh, no. The sandwiches (read: not sarnies) that belong on the plate of a tiered stand deserve to be treated with love, care and just a little more finesse. Here's a few ideas to bring to the Christmas table, all of which are guaranteed to provide your guests with a jolly good show.

The classics you can always rely on:

- Cucumber and butter
- Coronation chicken
- Smoked salmon and cream cheese
- Prawns in marie sauce
- Smoked ham and mustard
- Roast beef and horseradish

Meat-free options for your herbivore friends:

- Goats cheese and chutney
- Pesto and roasted vegetables
- Cheddar cheese and pickle
- Hummus salad
- Tomato and mayonnaise

A Christmas special for everyone:

- Roasted turkey and stuffing
- Festive spiced gammon and chutney
- Chestnut stuffing and spinach
- Brie and cranberry sauce
- Red onion hummus and roast carrots

If you're feeling frightfully festive (and aren't too distracted by Buddy the Elf prancing around New York) you can take your sandwiches even further by giving them the real afternoon tea treatment. Slicing off the crusts and cutting them into triangles will give them that final flourish to elevate your Christmas spread. Now all that's missing is a pot of freshly brewed English Breakfast Tea to wash them down with...

Perfect tea pairing: Teapigs English Breakfast Tea. Zesty, malty and brimming with flavour, no sandwich is complete without a generous cup of our Everyday Brew.

Something savoury

Once the sandwiches are complete, it can be tempting to go straight in with the desserts. We'll get to that part soon... but remember, the ticket to nailing the perfect Christmas afternoon tea is serving an equal ratio of sweet to savoury. There's plenty of room on the stand for a little bit of everything, so be sure to include a selection of savoury snacks to satisfy your guests salty cravings before the sweet tooth hits. Here are some tried and tested ideas from the Teapigs team to help you make elegant food your speciali-tea...

Crowd pleasers

- Quiche lorraine
- Smoked salmon blinis
- Boiled eggs and caviar
- Chorizo and smoked cheddar
- Sausage rolls

Vegan and vegetarian friendly

- Olive and pesto tartlets
- Goats cheese and leek rolls
- Cheese and onion quiche
- Mini falafel bites
- Feta and cranberry puff pies

Festive fixings

- Cauliflower cheese rolls
- Walnut stuffed dates
- Pigs in blanket bites
- Chestnut stuffed mushrooms
- Devilled eggs

As you can gather from our quickly growing inspiration lists, the choice of savoury options for a Christmas afternoon tea go on longer than Mariah Carey holding a high note. It's true what they say. Variety really is the spice of life. The more options you can offer your guests, the more likely they'll leave truly satisfied (or maybe slightly over satisfied, but what's Christmas without a little overindulgence?) Be sure to keep the portions perfectly bite sized for a more elegant feasting experience and keep that sweet to savoury balance, to ensure everyone's personal tastes are catered for.

Perfect tea pairing: Teapigs Earl Grey Tea. The light touch of bergamot goes down a treat with savoury dishes, best served black or with a dash of milk.

Sweeten up treats

Now we have the salty snacks covered, let's dig into those desserts to delight. Christmas is a time for lavish puddings jewelled with dried fruits, lashings of boozy brandy creams, and chocolates galore. Merge these with the miniature concept of afternoon tea and you're already giving your loved ones the best Christmas gift possible. It's worth keeping in mind that not everyone enjoys the traditional Christmas pudding or mince pie, so here's some other options that can also be considered for the Big Christmas Shopping List...

Classic treats

- Macaroons
- Mini flavoured cakes (Victoria sponge, black forest gâteau, lemon drizzle)
- Frangipane tarts
- Shortbread hearts
- Scones with clotted cream and jam

Veggie and vegan options

- Chocolate covered dates
- Dairy free cheesecake bites
- Gingerbread cookies
- Vegan fruit cake
- Coconut and rum snowballs

Mini festive favourites

- Mince pies
- Mini Christmas pudding
- Yule log
- Profiteroles
- Orange and ginger cake

As humans, we tend to eat with our eyes first. Sure, sometimes they're a little bigger than our stomach (peppermint tea, anyone?) but the more visually appealing you can make your spread – the more your guests will want to dive in and sample a bite from every sweet spectrum. You can easily achieve this by adding finishing touches like using edible holly berries and glitter to decorate your desserts or dusting a generous layer of icing sugar on top of a 'snow' effect. Attention to detail always goes a long way, especially when it comes to your guests capturing aesthetic shots to share on socials. Who knows? You could be requested for bookings come next year...

Perfect tea pairing: Teapigs Mint Tea. Refreshing, super minty, and ideal for settling those well satisfied stomachs.

Scones to salivate

No Christmas afternoon tea would be complete without a selection of scones to choose from. The great thing about scones is that they are delightfully versatile, allowing you to experiment with new festive flavours to add to your own afternoon tea. You can keep it traditional with firm favourites, but also unwrap a whole new experience by adding in festive spices or fruits like clementine for the ultimate Christmas feast. We're sharing a few of our personal favourites to get your taste buds tingling. Get 'em before they're all scone...

Favourite flavours

- Plain and simple
- Dried fruits
- Pear and ginger
- White chocolate and raspberry
- Cranberry and cinnamon

What's your jam?

- Blackcurrant & sloe gin
- Spiced cranberry and strawberry
- Apricot & star anise
- Orange & ginger
- Apple & cinnamon

Sweet creams are made of these

- Brandy cream
- Whipped cream
- Clotted cream
- Vanilla cream
- Bailey's cream

Now, as we said at the beginning, we're not going to tell you about the right order in which the jam and cream should go. The opinions are divided here at Teapigs HQ, but we have come to accept that everyone's technique is different. So, we'll let you decide on the next steps. All we can say is let your scone imagination run wild and create your own unique flavours that are guaranteed to get the festive spirits raised around the room. If we can't offer advice on the correct jam and cream method, perhaps we can offer you some suggestions for the best tea to pair them with...

Perfect tea pairing: Teapigs gleuhwein Tea. This booze-free brew is guaranteed to mentally whisk you away to snowy mountains, making it the ultimate Christmas tea.

The finishing touches

Creating the perfect Christmas afternoon tea is all about the small intricate touches. Not only because they look impressive, but also because it shows how much time and care you've taken in to making it. Your friends and family will no doubt appreciate your efforts, especially when it comes to those second (or third, or fourth) helpings. Consider this gift of love. After all, isn't that what Christmas is all about?

Here's a few final tips on serving to ensure you can really make the most out of your culinary skills...

- **Crockery and cutlery** – If there's a time to bring out the fine china or the special plates, it's now. Serving your sweet and savoury treats on elegant plates will make the afternoon tea experience all the more special.
- **Tea servers** – Tea is an integral part of every afternoon tea, so don't forget to bring out your favourite teapots, cups, saucers and trays to elevate your spread even further. Raised pinkies optional.
- **Tiered stands** – If you can get your hands on a tiered stand to serve all your favourite treats, it's most certainly worth it to give that 'classic tearoom' feel.
- **Buffet style** – It's not the be all and end all of you can't find a traditional afternoon tea stand. Try placing elegant plates on upside down jars to get a similar look for less.
- **Tablescaping** – Bring the table to life with seasonal flowers and greenery, like red berries, fir and pinecones. You can also add some candles to create a warming atmosphere guaranteed to show your afternoon tea in the best light.

And there we have it... the perfect Christmas Afternoon Tea awaits. Of course, it requires a little extra planning and time, but if you make everything ahead you can be fully present on the day so that you can enjoy every bite with those closest to you. Plus, since you did the cooking, you have immediate access to a no washing up pass – at which point it is only right to pop open the bottle of bubbles.

Have a very Merry Christmas, from all of us at Teapigs. We may not be able to agree on the order of which jam and cream should be applied, but we do know that there's a perfect tea for every meal or snack.

Give the gift of pure quali-tea and explore our full range of sustainable and delicious teas here.