



HOSTING A TEA PARTY

Margaret's Activities

Here are some ways to host your very own Victorian-style tea party. While you may not have fancy china and silver platters at your disposal, you can still recall the feeling of a Victorian tea party with these simple guidelines.

Things You'll Need:

- Victorian-style calling cards
- A tea set
- Plates
- Napkin rings
- Silverware
- Platters (plastic or silver)
- Lacey tablecloth and other table linens
- Place cards
- Tea (any variety)
- Snacks for your guests
- Classical or ragtime music
- Flowers, for decoration

Inviting Your Guests:

Create a set of Victorian-style calling cards. These will serve as your tea party invitations. You can research different formats of calling cards on the web and design your own layout. There are thousands of clip art sites that have free images of flowers and your home computer should have a few fancy script fonts for you to experiment with. Victorian tea parties typically had 8 guests, but you can invite as many or as few people as you like. Invites should always go out at least two weeks before a party.

Prepping the Table:

Cover the table with a white tablecloth. Victorian and Edwardian women would have used an expensive tablecloth made of damask or brocade, but you can use a paper one for your party. If possible, cover your white cloth with a lace tablecloth. If you can't find a lace tablecloth, head to the fabric store and buy a few yards of lace. Your guests won't know the difference! Set the table with delicate china decorated with a floral pattern, polished flatware, and water goblets.

Voyage on the Great Titanic

1.

Hosting A Tea Party



HOSTING A TEA PARTY *(continued)*

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Fold linen napkins and wrap them with polished silver napkin rings. Place sugar, cream and milk in fancy serving dishes. If you can't find some of these items, don't worry! Having even few of these fancy details will recall a classic Victorian tea party.

Next, create place cards for each guest. You can create these on the computer using clip art and fancy script fonts. If you're feeling particularly artistic, try using a calligraphy pen and pressed flowers. Place the cards in front of each table setting.

Food to Serve:

Petite finger sandwiches with fillings like smoked salmon and cucumbers were a staple of every tea party. Offer your guests fresh fruit and cheese to nibble on. No tea party is complete without scones, crumpets, and jam.

Offer a selection of two or three teas. Traditionally, Earl Grey was served at tea parties but you can choose any variety you like. Serve tea in a china or silver teapot (never from the kettle). Round out the menu with classic petit fours, which are delicate bite-sized layer cakes covered with marzipan or fondant. You can probably find petit fours or a similar dessert at the local grocery store.

Serve all food on silver platters or cut glass trays—if you don't have these, pick up the plastic versions at the grocery store. Line each serving tray with paper lace doilies and remember to keep the food portions small. Over-indulgence was frowned upon in Margaret's era. Decorate your house with flowers and play some ragtime or classical music to get your guests in the mood.

Conversation and Dress:

Conversation should be kept light and lady-like. Ladies in Margaret's time always made an effort to be very polite. Gossip would certainly be frowned upon.

Encourage your friends to dress in traditional Victorian garb—big hats adorned with flowers, modest lacey dresses with high collars, and gloves would all be appropriate for your tea party. Try searching your local thrift store for dresses and hats—you might even come across a vintage tea set!

Ask a grown-up for help when using knives and other sharp objects, and when using candles. Be sure to use pot holders when handling warm wax.

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2.

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