



CREAM AND APRICOT TEA.

A MEAL of these colours is much easier to prepare in the fruit season than in spring or winter, for although we are not going to tie ourselves down to apricots and cream only, still they must enter largely into the factors of the meal; nevertheless, we will give suggestions that will make a cream and apricot tea possible at all seasons of the year, and a "cake tea" lends itself most accommodatingly to this arrangement of colour at all seasons.

You can arrange this meal either for a sit-down table tea or a stand-up buffet tea; in either case remember that the decorations, like those for breakfast, must not be too elaborate, but they must be very daintily prepared. We will begin with the table-cloth, which should be of fine cream linen, embroidered with apricot silk; a handsome arabesque border above the hem will be a very suitable pattern, and it should be repeated in a square or oblong for the centre. Or you may have a border of drawn thread-work, sewn with apricot silk. Fringe the linen all round, and make a double-knotted heading. In this case it will be better to have a loose centre, drawn and fringed to match. The pattern should be fairly open, and would look well lined with apricot silk or satin ribbon. Of course, whichever style you choose, your little serviettes must be worked to match. Tea serviettes differ from others, as they are only used for laying across the lap to prevent crumbs and drops of tea falling on the dress. They should be about eight inches wide and eighteen inches long, hemmed neatly at each side, and embroidered and fringed at the ends only. If you ornament them with drawn work, you need not line it with ribbon, but there should be just a suspicion of apricot silk embroidery between the rows of drawing, and you may embroider your crest or monogram at one corner. Fold them plainly, and lay one on each plate.

For table decoration you must be guided by the season; a light-looking plant in a silver or cream-china jar would be suitable for the centre. A well-trained thunbergia, with its fragile cream or apricot blossoms, or a well-grown begonia, either double or single, of the required shades of colour would look well, and you may have glasses of cream and apricot flowers lightly arranged with ferns round the centre and at the corners, but do not introduce flowers of any other colour. Your tea-service should be apricot and cream china, but if you have not that mixture, plain cream may be used; but if you are the fortunate possessor of an old Spode apricot-and-gold service, your scheme of colour will be perfect. Your tea equipage should be of silver, for a brass or copper kettle would upset the whole tone of your table; of the two, copper would not be quite so bad as brass. We will place our fruit on the table next, for tea without fruit would be like dinner without vegetables; and although I am going to allow you a few dishes of fruit, I must advise you to save enough for a fruit-salad, to be served in a cream-china bowl. In separate dishes you may have, of course, apricots, white raspberries, bananas with the rind taken off, oranges, peeled, and the white taken off, divided into quarters and covered with sifted sugar, apricot-fleshed melon, cut in quarters, and any other fruit attainable of the right shade of colour. The salad may be a mixture of any of the above fruits, cut in pieces and slightly mashed; pineapple also may be added, and ripe pears, sweetened with sifted white sugar; add a little grated nutmeg, and, if possible, a small handful of freshly-picked cowslip flowers. We miss a great deal of pleasure by not making more culinary use of flowers;

many of them are most wholesome and fragrant, and give a delicious flavour. A rich thick cream must be added to form salad. And now for the eatables. Bread and butter, daintily rolled, will be quite suitable; small glasses or shells of marmalade and apricot jam placed about the table will also give the right tone of colour, and you may have marmalade sandwiches; hot scones will be a better colour than any other hot tea-cake. You may also have shortbread, which is a nice cream colour; make them round, about the size of the top of a tumbler, pinch them round the edge and ornament them thus: Boil two or three large carrots till quite tender; then put a little of the water into a stewpan, with the juice of one lemon, four ounces of sifted white sugar, and a teaspoonful of powdered ginger. Boil to a thick syrup. Slice the carrots into rounds; then cut them to one size with an ornamental round tin-cutter. Boil them in the syrup for a quarter of an hour or more; take them out, and while hot roll them in a nice apricot-coloured coarse sparkling sugar, and place one on the middle of each cake. Don't scorn this carrot preserve because it is only a vegetable; carrots are far too much slighted by the English. They are wholesome, easy to obtain, and can be cooked in a great variety of ways, besides being served only with boiled mutton.

As all tea confectionery can be made to assume the shades of apricot and cream with very little trouble, we need not particularise every item of the menu, but give a few general directions; the first of which is: Do not bake anything too much. Keep all your buns and cakes a light colour, and for icing use a *little* coffee to take off the dead whiteness; and to make it apricot, put some of the yolk of the egg with the white, and a few drops of essence of cochineal to make it the required shade. We will give you a recipe for apricot cake, which is very good: Six ounces of butter worked to a cream, the grated rind of half a lemon, six ounces of white sifted sugar. Work this mixture ten minutes more, to look creamy; then add the yolks of four eggs and ten ounces of Vienna flour. Stir the mixture free from lumps, and then add the whites of the eggs, stiffly beaten, half an ounce of baking-powder, and six ounces of glacé apricots cut in pieces. Drop the fruit into the mixture as lightly as possible; put into a lined cake-tin, and bake one hour and three-quarters. When cold, ice the top with cream-coloured icing and ornament with glacé apricots, cut into leaves and small squares; a little candied lemon-peel may be used also if approved of, both for mixing in the cake and ornamenting it. Eclairs filled with cream will be very suitable for this tea, if lightly baked, and as an excellent recipe was given in this magazine, we need not repeat it. You may also have an orange cake, which is both pretty and good, and of a lovely apricot tint when properly made.

If you like to have some savoury sandwiches, make them thus: Boil two eggs hard. Shell them, and pound them to a paste in a marble mortar, with two ounces of butter, a little salt, a pinch of cayenne pepper, and a tablespoonful of anchovy sauce, which will make the mixture a good shade of apricot. Cut some bread-and-butter very thin, spread it with the mixture; lay another piece of bread-and-butter on the top, spread another layer of the mixture on the top of that, and so on, till you have three layers of the mixture. Then cut the crust off all round, and cut into strips about an inch wide. It is a little change from the ordinary sandwich.