

THE COSEY CORNER.

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How to Give an "Afternoon Tea."

"FIVE o'clock teas," they are also called, either name is fitting. These entertainments are vastly popular with those who wish to cancel, with one entertainment, all their social obligations, and the hostess generally goes over her entire visiting list when issuing her invitations. They are simply afternoon receptions, at which each guest is expected to partake of the light refreshment offered. Customs differ slightly, in different cities, in the exact manner of dispensing these last. Usually the hostess stands near the door, always in some conspicuous place, to receive her guests; and if the tea be given in honor of any friend, this friend stands next to the hostess, and each guest is presented to her on entering the room. Sometimes the hostess will be assisted by several friends. The caller simply shakes hands with her hostess and friends, and exchanges greetings with them, then passing along to other friends who may be present. With any guests who do not seem to be much at home it is customary for one of the receiving party to accompany such to the tea-table. The hostess has literally nothing to do with dispensing her own hospitalities. In the city of Washington, the custom of having certain of your friends to pour the tea is very general, but here that is the exception, and either maids with neat caps, or else men servants, stand at the table and serve from it the tea and coffee.

Use a rather small table, and do not have the cups and plates set *around* it, but have the tea-things, cups, plates, etc., all irregularly placed. Usually there will be at each end, or in the center, a low "rose bowl" filled carelessly with the fragrant beauties, or some low-set arrangement of ferns or smilax and flowers. Scattered about have pretty little dishes of salted almonds, bon-bons and crystallized fruits. Many have these bon-bon trays placed around on mantels and little tables. *Bouillon* (hot beef tea) should be served from the pantry, brought in little cups. Coffee-ice, if you have it, should be put into a large bowl. Chocolate may

either be served from the pantry, or from a pretty chocolate pot on the table. There should be at the side of it a bowl of whipped cream to be put on the top of each cup.

You see there is not to be much on your tea-table, and even at the largest teas, with hundreds of people coming and going, you would only require three or four dozen tea-cups, as they would be constantly going out to be washed and coming in again.

Unless your table top is of such rare and handsome wood that you want it to show, spread the table with a fine white cloth, having felt beneath it. (In the former case, a handsome embroidered doily should be placed under each article upon it.) Candle-sticks, with the candles lighted as the daylight wanes, are pretty on the table. Have a few plates in a pile, a few teaspoons, some doilies, sugar bowl and cream-jug. A plate of thinnest bread and butter, spread and rolled, fancy cracker jar filled with delicate crackers or wafers, thin biscuit that come specially for afternoon teas, a cake basket with fancy cakes, or a cake on a plate and a knife to cut it; these are all the necessary furnishings of an afternoon tea-table, and you need not have all I have mentioned.

In Washington there is usually a larger array than with us; you will find at a tea, salads, sandwiches, and generally creams and ices.

Nobody pretends to sit at the table, or even stand near it, and all hold their cups and plates in hand. Above all things have a good service, let all used dishes be instantly removed and fresh ones substituted, and have all dishes kept daintily replenished.

Provide no extra chairs, very few persons will care to sit down, as most of the guests come in visiting costume and do not remove their wraps. But it is usual to have an upper room open for this purpose for those who do choose to remove them.

The idea of the tea-table is beauty and delicacy, at the expense of substantiality. It is by no means a lunch or supper-table. The theory is simply that you invite your friends all for an afternoon call, and then offer them slight refreshment.