

# Spring Into Tea Time

## TIME TO CONNECT OVER SWEET & SAVORY BITES AND TASTY TEAS

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**S**UPER SOFT BREAD ENVELOPING FLAVORFUL fillings, warm scones paired with sweet spreads and colorful desserts that are ever so dainty. These are just a few favorite things about an afternoon tea that sets it apart from other culinary options. A sense of anticipation swells when the tiered trays and tea pots filled with perfectly steeped tea arrive at the table. But there's much more to an afternoon tea experience than the food.

Part of the inspiration behind **Mimi's Tea Cottage**, which opened in West Chester less than a year ago, was centered on just that. "It's a lot about socializing. We want you to enjoy it and have fun," said Karen Klein, owner of Mimi's.

Getting together for tea gives the group a chance to exhale and take time connecting with who's there, whether friends, children or grandchildren. For Klein, who is "Mimi" to her grandchildren, her love of tea was cultivated by her late mother, Patricia, who'd organize tea outings with her two daughters and two granddaughters.

After retiring from a major insurance company in 2019, Klein was then able to revisit her deep desire to do something centered on food, since she'd always loved cooking and had a passion for baking. A few years ago, while visiting a tea room with her sister, Victoria, the idea of bringing her own tea room to life struck her. Not long after, Mimi's Tea Cottage opened its doors.

As West Chester's only English tea room, Mimi's has a cozy interior complete with floral trimmings, a collection of teapots and an English telephone booth painted pink. Klein's love of baking is clear when you see and bite into her desserts, all made from scratch, like her chocolate raspberry truffle tea cookies, strawberry cheesecake cups and salted caramel toffee brownies.

The menu changes monthly, aiming to offer something new that reflects each season, and ranges from a pint-sized children's tea, called Ducklings, to the most elaborate full tea offering, called The Beaumont. This full tea service starts with a choice of soup or quiche and moves on to a three-tiered tray complete with a scone

and spreads, four tea sandwiches and four desserts, along with a bottomless pot of tea.

Customers range from groups of women donning tea hats to male and female West Chester University students stopping in for a study break. Tea is available throughout the day, from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursdays through Sundays. Look for special themed teas at Mimi's, with a Mother's Day tea menu planned for the entire month of May.

Read on for recipes to give you a taste of a tea experience in your own home!



Karen Klein, owner of Mimi's Tea Cottage



### Mimi's Cucumber Dill Tea Sandwiches

A classic cucumber tea sandwich is a must-have for any tea room. Mimi's version has a mixture of dill, chives and garlic with a bit of lemon juice to round out the flavor. This spread also makes a great dip as an appetizer when you add either chips, crackers or pita bread. It also serves as a wonderful sauce to top a grilled chicken breast.

Makes about 32 tea sandwiches or about 1 cup of dill spread



- 1 cucumber, preferably English, thinly sliced
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- ¼ C. mayonnaise
- 1 ½ T. fresh dill, chopped
- 1 ½ T. fresh chives, chopped
- 1 T. lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 1 loaf soft white bread

In a large bowl, add cream cheese, mayonnaise, dill, chives, lemon juice, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Mix with an electric mixer until fully combined. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Spread dill mixture on two slices of white bread. Lay sliced cucumbers on one slice of the bread, overlapping cucumbers. Place other slice of bread on top and cut off the crusts. Cut into triangle-, square- or rectangle-shaped tea sandwiches. Repeat the steps with the remaining slices of bread.

You can assemble the sandwiches a day in advance. Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to one day. To keep them from drying out, place a piece of wax paper on top of the sandwiches and then a damp paper towel on top of the wax paper, keeping the wet paper towel from contact with the tea sandwiches.

### Take a Tea Service Tour

"There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea." – Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*

Here are a few tea houses within an easy drive, so you can experience the unique offerings and charm of each.

#### A Taste of Britain, Wayne

This spacious English tea room, located at the Eagle Village Shops, offers a tea shop, retail store, catering and a cafe with a full afternoon tea experience, plus other food. A mainstay of 32 years. [ATOBritain.com](http://ATOBritain.com)

#### The Gifford-Risley House, Media

Tea service here is open to the public on Sundays and is served in a Gothic Revival chalet-style bed and breakfast. Spots fill up fast. [Gifford-RisleyHouse.com](http://Gifford-RisleyHouse.com)

#### Orchard Tea Room at Rose Hip Barn, Thornton

This tea room features a cozy atmosphere with an afternoon tea experience one Friday and one Saturday a month. [GreenhalghTea.com](http://GreenhalghTea.com)

#### The Painted Tea Cup, Upper Darby

The Painted Tea Cup offers a boutique for shopping and tearoom serving high tea Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. [ThePaintedTeaCup.com](http://ThePaintedTeaCup.com)

#### Mary Cassatt Tea Room & Garden at the Rittenhouse Hotel, Philadelphia

This traditional afternoon tea experience is suited for an extra-special occasion. Enjoy an intimate escape and the age-old tradition of afternoon tea, Philadelphia style. [RittenhouseHotel.com](http://RittenhouseHotel.com)

### Tea-Infused Shortbread Cookies

This is a very versatile (and easy) recipe, because any kind of tea will create a lovely, flavorful shortbread cookie. Mimi's Tea Cottage uses either a classic Earl Grey tea topped with a lemon glaze or a chocolate raspberry truffle tea topped with a chocolate drizzle.

Makes about 3 dozen

#### For the cookie dough:

- 1 C. unsalted butter
- 2 T. loose tea, any flavor, minced
- ½ C. powdered sugar
- 2 C. all-purpose flour
- ½ tsp. salt

#### For the glazes:

##### Lemon glaze (pairs well with Earl Grey tea)

- 1 C. powdered sugar
- 1 ½ T. lemon juice



## Chocolate drizzle (pairs well with chocolate raspberry truffle tea-infused cookies)

1 C. chocolate chips  
¼ tsp. vegetable oil



### To make the cookies:

Blend the softened butter and tea leaves together and allow to sit at room temperature for at least two hours or longer. (Mimi's lets theirs sit overnight in the refrigerator and then brings it to room temperature the next day.)

Once the butter has finished setting, preheat oven to 350°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside.

Cream the butter, tea mixture and powdered sugar with mixer. Add in the flour and salt. Continue to mix until a soft dough forms.

Roll dough out on lightly floured surface to ¼-inch thick. Cut out cookies using a 2-inch round or heart-shaped cookie cutter.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until the edges are golden brown.

Once cooled, drizzle glaze of choice (instructions below).

Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to a week at room temperature.

### To make the lemon glaze:

In a standard bowl, mix the powdered sugar and lemon juice together until the consistency is creamy enough to drizzle or spoon on to cookies.

### To make the chocolate drizzle:

Melt chocolate chips in a double boiler. Add vegetable oil. Drizzle over cookies using a fork.

## Classic Scones

Attempting to make scones from scratch is one thing I put off for years until a friend came to a tea I hosted with the most delectable scones. I was inspired,

and she happily passed on the recipe. As long as you follow the instructions to a T, this is a foolproof, winning scone recipe by Mark Bittman of the New York Times. My kids and I could not have been happier with the outcome!

Makes 8 to 10 scones



2 C. cake flour, more as needed  
½ tsp. salt  
2 tsp. baking powder  
3 T. sugar  
5 T. cold butter, cut into pieces  
1 egg  
½ to ¾ C. heavy cream, more for brushing

Preheat the oven to 450°. In a food processor, add the flour, salt, baking powder and two tablespoons sugar (reserve the remaining tablespoon). Pulse to combine.

Add the butter and pulse until the mixture resembles cornmeal. Add the egg and enough cream to form a slightly sticky dough, but not too sticky. (If too sticky, add some flour, but as little as possible so that that dough still sticks to your hands.)

Lightly flour your workspace and knead the dough once or twice before pressing it into a ¾-inch circle. Cut into 2-inch rounds using a biscuit cutter or glass.

Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper (or use ungreased) and evenly space the rounds. Reshape the remaining dough and cut out remaining rounds. Brush the top of each scone with a small amount of cream and lightly sprinkle with remaining sugar.

Bake for 9 to 11 minutes, until the scones are a golden brown. Serve immediately.

Store leftovers in an airtight container at room temperature for up to two days.

*Tip: If you're making your own scones, save time by buying the lemon curd spread. Try the Bonne Maman brand, which tastes homemade. You might even buy a quiche, and your guests will understand your priorities.*

## Farm to Cup

Looking for tea made with locally grown ingredients that's handcrafted in small batches? You don't have to look far! These businesses grow their ingredients with care and their teas have a super fresh taste that sets them apart. Check the websites for availability and online ordering.

### The Camphill Village Kimberton Hills Secret Garden Teas, Kimberton

This is a dynamic farming, gardening and handcrafting intentional community that includes developmentally disabled adults who work and live together. They grow all the ingredients for their teas using biodynamic practices. Enjoy the stinging nettle, bergamot, mint, lemon verbena, tulsi (aka holy basil) and red clover blossoms that go into their Morning Blend Herbal Tea.

[CamphillKimberton.org](http://CamphillKimberton.org)

### Areté Herbs, Unionville

Areté's teas are created to promote natural healing with plant-based products. They use organic ingredients to make herbal remedies, like their Stress Free tea, which calms the nerves and restores balance to the body, made with an infusion of tulsi, chamomile, lemon balm, oat tops, lavender, nettles, skullcap and licorice. [AreteHerbs.com](http://AreteHerbs.com)

### Steep of Faith Tea Co., East Coventry

You can find their tulsi-based teas, like Transcendental Minted, made of a blend of sustainably grown herbs including holy basil, Korean mint, mountain mint and Mayan mint at Kimberton Whole Foods. Owner David Ryle is also the director of programming at Trellis for Tomorrow.

### Lancaster Farmacy, Lancaster

Their products are rooted in the ancient knowledge behind natural healing. Try their medicinal Chaga Chai tea, made by blending warming spices, herbs and medicinal mushrooms for cleansing and supporting the immune system. Farmer owned since 2009.

[LancasterFarmacy.com](http://LancasterFarmacy.com)

### Oma Herbal Teas, Schwenksville

Grown, dried and packaged in Schwenksville in Montgomery County, Oma offers an Herbal Tea CSA that provides a monthly tube of tea with fun names like Chill Pill Tea, Happy Place Tea, Lean Mean Greens Tea and Baby Bump Tea. [OmaHerbalTeas.com](http://OmaHerbalTeas.com)

## Chicken Salad Tea Sandwiches

One of my late mom's favorite tea sandwiches was chicken salad, but it had to be prepared just right — including chicken that was shredded, not

cubed, and paired with a very generous amount of mayonnaise, and that had to be Hellman's. Boiling the chicken ensures it will be moist and soft. My mom loved pairing these sandwiches with iced tea garnished with lemon.

Serves 2 to 3 (makes 6 tea sandwiches)



2 C. shredded chicken (boiled)  
½ C. mayonnaise, Hellman's preferred  
1 rib celery, chopped  
1 tsp. onion, very finely chopped  
4 slices soft white bread (or whole wheat, if preferred)  
Salt and pepper to taste

Place the shredded chicken in a small bowl. Add celery, onion and mayonnaise and stir to combine.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Spread a generous amount of chicken salad on two slices of bread. Top with remaining pieces and lightly press down to enable the sandwich top to adhere to the chicken salad.

Trim off the crusts and cut the sandwiches crosswise into thirds to create rectangle-shaped finger sandwiches.

You can assemble the sandwiches a day in advance. Store leftovers in an airtight container for up to one day. To keep them from drying out, place a piece of wax paper on top of the sandwiches and then a damp paper towel on top of the wax paper, keeping the wet paper towel from contact with the tea sandwiches. ♦

*Courtney Diener-Stokes is an award-winning journalist, author, food writer, photographer and food stylist. Most recently she co-authored the Kimberton Whole Foods Cookbook and Farmhouse Manna: Nourishing Recipes and Rituals for Head, Heart, Hands & Soul. She lives in the Oley Valley countryside with her husband, three children, two Babydoll Southdown sheep, a flock of bantam chickens and a Bernedoodle named Daisy.*



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