

# Tea Time

TEAROOMS • FOOD • CHINA • TABLE SETTINGS

over **75** tips, recipes  
& ideas

**Delicious  
French  
Macarons**

see page 58

**Taking Tea  
in Japan**



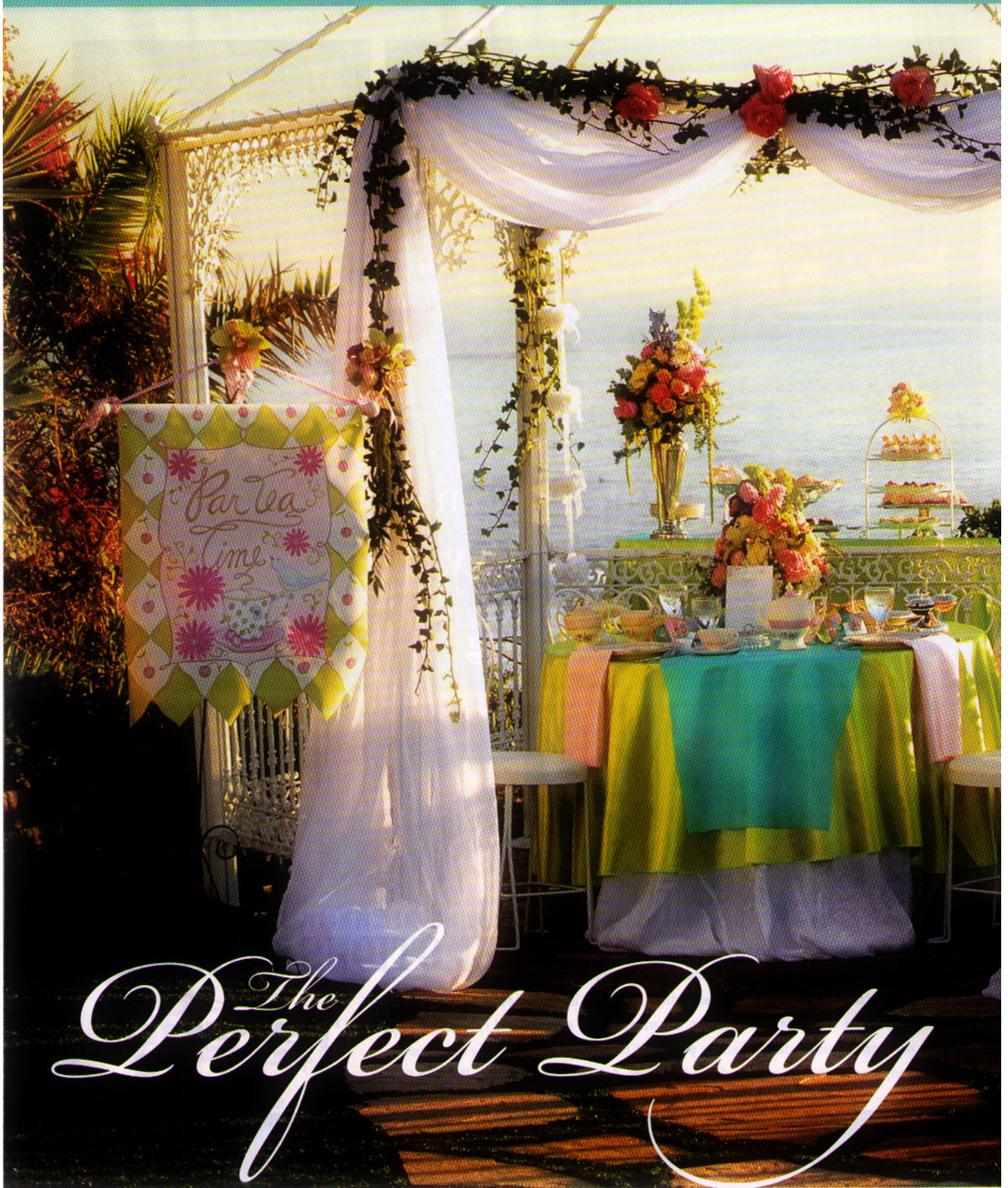
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**Planning the Perfect Tea Party**



# *The Perfect Party*

AN UP-AND-COMING CALIFORNIA EVENTS PLANNER OFFERS HER FAVORITE TRIED-AND-TRUE TIPS AND HINTS FOR TEA PARTIES GREAT AND SMALL.


BY STACEY NORWOOD / PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALL ABOUT YOU PHOTOGRAPHY AND DESIGN



*For more than ten years,* Risa Provincio has graced clients in the San Clemente, California area with her talents. Specializing in memory-making moments through her business Romanza Events, Risa has orchestrated parties from the intimate to the grandiose—wedding and baby showers, knitting and crochet parties, bar and bat mitzvahs, rehearsal dinners, weddings, pajama parties, and more.

Not only a party girl but also a tea enthusiast, Risa has added Afternoon Tea to her considerable menu of services. The acknowledged “Partea Planner” has graciously agreed to lift the curtain and share a few trade secrets. Always clever and ever thoughtful, Risa’s professionally-honed suggestions will inspire and guide the home hostess every step of the way—from initial planning to sweet fruition.





*Tea Party Menu*

*Sandwiches*

Egg Salad  
Almond Chicken Salad with Sprouts  
Cucumber, Watercress  
& Cream Cheese

*Scones*

Cream Scones  
Cranberry Scones  
Accompanied with Chantilly Cream,  
Lemon Curd, Orange Marmalade  
& Raspberry Fruit Preserve

*Sweets*

Fruit Tartlets, Lemony Bars, Cream Puffs,  
Chocolate Dipped Strawberries  
& Cake with  
Buttercream Frosting

*Drinking*

Pink Lemonade, Raspberries, Water,  
Hot Tea - Cream Tea, Garden Tea,  
Decaf, Apricot

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

As an events planner, Risa follows a simple motto regarding essentials for the event. Always offer guests:

- ✦ Something to do (*Don't overlook activities during the party.*)
- ✦ Something to see (*Fuss over details that appeal to the senses.*)
- ✦ Somewhere to sit (*Space planning is a must.*)

## FIVE MUSTS TO REMEMBER

**1** *Ensure guests' comfort.* If the tea party is outdoors, provide garden umbrellas or paper parasols to shade the sun. If indoors, be equally mindful of potential discomforts and distractions. Turn off televisions and keep music at a level that won't compete with the hum of conversation.

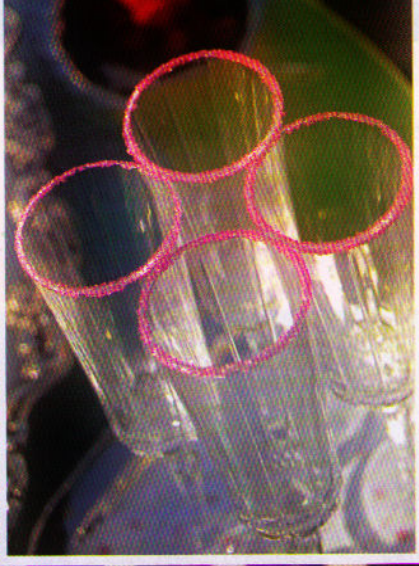
**2** *Move things around a bit.* At the party, encourage guests to mingle while sipping tea and nibbling bite-sized appetizers. After a bit, invite everyone to the table for teatime. Once the tea is over, usher guests to another area or room for an activity or to enjoy a farewell dessert together. Remember, the entire party doesn't need to be in just one spot.

**3** *Appeal to the senses—all five of them.* Perfume the party with the scent of freshly baked scones and tarts, candles, and, of course, a fragrant tea (Earl Grey is a wonderful choice). Display the beauty of fresh flowers and china on the table. Calm the mind by playing soft classical music in the background. Entice the palate with a thoughtful menu of savory and sweet tea foods whose flavors complement each other. Add exquisite garnishes where appropriate so that food appeals to the eye as well.

**4** *Organize little activities along the way.* At each tea table, place slips of paper in a small bowl or an organza bag, each with conversation-stimulating questions, such as, "If you could have tea with anyone—from the past or present—who would it be and why?"

**5** *Make everything as pretty as you possibly can.* Borrow or rent tables, chairs, serving wares, and other items if you must. And don't use paper table linens. One little spill and the setting is ruined.





*details*



### PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS

Focusing on the little things can make the difference between a so-so event and a truly smashing tea party. For example, guests love to see their names—it honors them. Beginning with the invitation in the mail and again on the day of the party, think of clever ways to “sneak” guests’ names into the event.

Try placing a printed name tag in a nice font at each place setting, display the seating arrangement for each table in a pretty frame, hand-script names on the party favors tags, and pen each guest a simple but sincere “thank you for attending” card. Guests will appreciate the extra touches and the time you took to show them that you were thinking of them during the preparations.

Pay equal attention to the food, but don’t feel as if you have to make or own everything yourself. The food doesn’t have to be made from scratch to be delicious. Hire a trusted bakery, caterer, or tearoom to provide a portion or all of the food. If you are entertaining a larger group, a rental company can not only provide tables and chairs to accommodate guests, but also assist with space planning—a huge task.

Devise decorative details in advance. In the planning

stages, consider first the locale (indoors or outdoors) and the space, but also the reason behind the occasion, be it a birthday party, a bridal or baby shower, or a spring fling to welcome the season. These factors influence the color scheme and help determine a motif to visually thread the event together. And don’t be afraid to improvise. The guests won’t know that the florist used pale pink roses instead of blush roses like you envisioned, so relax and move on to the next challenge.



## WORDS OF WISDOM

From her own hard-earned experience, Risa offers these suggestions to plan and perfect your tea parties.

- ✦ Stay organized from start to finish with planning and to-do checklists.
- ✦ Keep a running, accurate R.S.V.P. list so that you don't waste food or party favors or, worse, run out of supplies. Also, remember you will inevitably spend 25 percent more than you budgeted for, so consider overages during your planning.
- ✦ Have someone to help you on the day of the tea party, from setting up everything to serving and replenishing food trays, to washing and packing away china, silver, and crystal. Even if you have to pay a teenaged neighbor to help out, you will be glad you did!
- ✦ Always have a backup plan should inclement weather force you to move the party indoors or to another location.
- ✦ If the party is in your backyard, make sure to have the sprinkler system turned off the day before and the day of the event.
- ✦ As soon as the first guest arrives, stop fussing over everything and enjoy the tea party. Even if the scones are overbaked and hard as pucks, have a good laugh over it and have another cup of tea (or Champagne)! Guests will follow your lead. If you relax and enjoy the party, they will, too.