GENERAL

savoury recipes for afternoon tea

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Introduction

Afternoon tea is a cherished tradition that invites us to pause, indulge, and enjoy a moment of quiet conviviality. While the classic image of delicate finger sandwiches, dainty scones, and sweet pastries often dominates the conversation, a growing number of tea lovers are turning to **savoury recipes for afternoon tea** to add depth, variety, and a touch of sophistication to their gatherings. Savoury options not only complement the floral and citrus notes of a well chosen tea but also provide heartier, more satisfying options that keep guests coming back for more.

In this guide, we'll explore the world of savory afternoon tea, from timeless sandwich classics to inventive pastry creations. We'll delve into pairing strategies, presentation ideas, and seasonal twists that will help you craft a menu that feels both traditional and refreshingly modern. Whether you're hosting a casual brunch with friends, planning a wedding reception, or simply treating yourself, these recipes and tips will elevate your tea experience to new heights.

Why Savoury Recipes Make the Perfect Afternoon Tea

Adding savoury items to your afternoon tea spread offers several distinct advantages:

- Balance of Flavors – The slight bitterness of black tea or the subtle sweetness of Earl Grey is beautifully countered by the umami of a well seasoned sandwich or the richness of a cheese board.
- Increased Satiety – Savoury dishes tend to be more filling, which is ideal for a mid afternoon meal that bridges breakfast and dinner.
- Versatility – From vegetarian to gluten free, savoury recipes can be tailored to accommodate a wide range of dietary preferences.
- Visual Appeal – Colorful, bite size creations add depth and texture to your tea table, making it more engaging for guests.
- Seasonal Adaptability – Savoury ingredients can be swapped in and out according to the season, ensuring freshness and relevance.

Choosing the Right Savoury Bites

When planning a menu, it's helpful to categorize your options into a few key groups. This structure ensures you have a harmonious mix of textures, flavors, and visual interest.

1. Sandwiches and Rolls

Thinly sliced breads or delicate rolls are the backbone of any afternoon tea. Think classic cucumber, smoked salmon, or a more adventurous spinach and feta roll.

2. Mini Scones and Biscuits

These bite sized pastries can be savory or sweet. Try a cheddar and chive scone or a rosemary focaccia biscuit for a flavorful twist.

3. Savory Pastries and Pies

Mini quiches, tarts, or puff pastry turnovers bring a comforting, homely feel to the spread.

4. Cheese and Charcuterie Boards

A thoughtfully arranged board offers variety and encourages guests to mix and match flavors.

5. Fresh Salads and Cold Dishes

Light salads, hummus, or antipasto platters provide a refreshing counterpoint to richer items.

Classic Savoury Sandwiches for Afternoon Tea

Below are three timeless sandwich recipes that will become staples on your tea table. Each recipe is simple to prepare yet delivers a burst of flavor that pairs beautifully with tea.

Cucumber & Cream Cheese Sandwich

This refreshing sandwich is light, crisp, and perfect for a spring or summer tea.

- Ingredients (serves 8)
- 8 slices of white or whole grain bread
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh dill
- 2 large cucumbers, thinly sliced
- Fresh mint leaves, optional

Method

1. Spread a thin layer of butter on each slice of bread.
2. In a bowl, mix cream cheese, pepper, and dill until smooth.
3. Spread the mixture onto four slices of bread.
4. Arrange cucumber slices on top, add a few mint leaves if desired.
5. Cover with the remaining slices, butter side down.
6. Cut each sandwich into six equal triangles and serve immediately.

Smoked Salmon & Dill Pâté Sandwich

For a touch of luxury, this smoked salmon sandwich adds a savory depth that pairs well with a robust tea like Assam.

- Ingredients (serves 8)
- 8 slices of rye bread, toasted
- 6 ounces smoked salmon, flaked
- 3 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon capers, rinsed
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped red onion
- Fresh lemon zest, optional

Method

1. In a bowl, combine smoked salmon, cream cheese, lemon juice, capers, dill, and red onion.
2. Mix until a smooth pâté forms.
3. Spread the mixture onto the toasted rye slices.

4. Garnish with lemon zest and serve.

Egg Salad & Bacon Sandwich

Rich and comforting, this sandwich offers a hearty bite that works well with a lighter tea like Darjeeling.

- Ingredients (serves 8)
- 8 slices of sourdough bread
- 4 hard boiled eggs, chopped
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon chopped chives
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 strips of bacon, cooked and crumbled
- Salt and pepper to taste

Method

1. In a bowl, mix eggs, mayonnaise, mustard, chives, lemon juice, salt, and pepper.
2. Fold in crumbled bacon.
3. Spread the mixture onto four slices of bread.
4. Top with the remaining slices and cut into quarters.

Mini Savory Scones and Biscuits

Small, flavorful scones and biscuits are perfect for an elegant afternoon tea. They’re easy to transport, can be made ahead, and offer a delightful contrast to sweet pastries.

Cheddar & Chive Scone

Cheesy, herby, and irresistibly flaky.

- Ingredients (makes 12)
- 2 cups all purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup cold unsalted butter, diced
- 1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
- 3/4 cup buttermilk
- 1 egg, beaten (for glaze)

Method

1. Preheat oven to 425°F (220°C).
2. In a large bowl, whisk flour, baking powder, and salt.
3. Cut in butter using a pastry cutter until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
4. Stir in cheese and chives.
5. Pour in buttermilk and mix until just combined.
6. Turn dough onto a floured surface and knead lightly.
7. Roll to 1 inch thickness and cut into 12 rounds.
8. Place on a parchment lined baking sheet.
9. Bake 12–15 minutes until golden.

10. Brush tops with beaten egg and return to oven for 2 minutes.

Rosemary & Olive Oil Biscuit

Perfect for a Mediterranean inspired tea.

- Ingredients (makes 12)
- 2 cups all purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3/4 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary
- Optional: 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese

Method

1. Preheat oven to 400°F (200°C).
2. Whisk flour, baking powder, and salt in a bowl.
3. Stir in rosemary and Parmesan if using.
4. Make a well in the center and pour in olive oil and milk.
5. Fold until dough just comes together.
6. Turn onto a floured surface and knead lightly.
7. Roll to 1 inch thickness and cut into 12 rounds.
8. Place on a parchment lined sheet and bake 12–15 minutes.

Savory Pastries and Pies

Mini pies and puff pastry turnovers add a comforting, homely touch to your tea spread. Below are two crowd pleasing recipes that are simple to assemble.

Mini Mushroom Quiche

A bite size quiche that’s rich, creamy, and packed with flavor.

- Ingredients (serves 12)
- 12 mini tart shells (store bought or homemade)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small onion, diced
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 large eggs

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