

Tea Talk

By Joyce A. Whitaker, owner of the Painted Lady, LLC

A reader has asked me to explain the difference between a **Proper Tea**, **Afternoon Tea** and a **High Tea**. A Proper Tea and Afternoon Tea are very similar in that they are served in the afternoon before four p.m. They feature tea service and a three-tiered stand of tea sandwiches and savories. This can include two or three tea sandwiches, a mini tart, scones and tea bread with jam and Devonshire cream or as many English do, simply serve cheese, crusty bread and fruit. The most important function of these teas is to provide an energy boost and a bit of relaxation in the middle of the day.

A High Tea is served after four and is considered to be a light supper, which usually includes a meat pie or main dish with assorted finger foods and ending with sweets. The term “High” Tea came from the fact that it is served on a high table (dinner table), while the other teas can be served from a smaller, lower, casual table in front of the window or by the fire or even out of doors on the porch or in the garden.

Another popular tea is a **Royal Tea**, which is any one of the above teas fare with the addition of a glass of wine or champagne and is always served with fine china and table service. The food is artful and the service is polished.

Many of the larger hotels such as the Marriott at Buckhead in Atlanta or Buchert Gardens in Victoria B.C. serve Royal Teas in addition to Afternoon or Proper Teas. The food is good, yet minimal and the price is between \$30-40; however, the elegance and memory is worth every bit of the price. The best and most memorable tea I have had is the one at the Grand Hotel on Mackinaw Island, Lake Michigan, which is under \$25, a great price for the ambiance enjoyed. This nostalgic setting is where the romantic movie *“Somewhere in Time”* was filmed. The service is elegant and the food is divine and delicious. They serve either on the famous long porch with wicker and yellow and white awnings with their noteworthy abundance of red geraniums (which is known as a part of their logo) or in the lounge area furnished with antiques, colorful murals of Lake Michigan and underfoot is a lush carpet of bright green leaves, red and orange geraniums set in a black framework. A truly amazing memory because you are served sparkling champagne by a tuxedoed server and you are encouraged to stay awhile relaxing and watching the sale boats in the bay.

My favorite vacation activity is to search for tea rooms across America and Canada. My husband and I visit every one we can and I collect menus and photos. My memories of tea rooms and their featured teas give me pleasure and a reason to sit quietly while revisiting them in my mind. Most often over tea, my husband and I have intimate conversations discussing the past and contemplating the future. I hope guests to our tea room feel the same welcoming experience at the Painted Lady and that their visit will become a part of their memory bank too.

Note: Joyce will answer your tea questions through the column. You may reach her at www.jwhitakerA-TEA-ROOM.com or stop by the Painted Lady, 327 E. Fifth in Marysville.