

## **In the Kitchen – Tea Party? Yes! – by Marcy Lytle**

Just before Christmas, a few friends gathered with me at my house, and we had a tea party. I had just purchased a new teapot and the cutest tea cups (wooden), and we had a spread of goodies and activities that would be so fun for February, as well. Invite a few friends, or set this up for you and him, however you want to enjoy!

For the table, I always include height, texture, light and color. White paper doilies under your candles work great (from the dollar store). Tiered serving trays work for height, and any greenery (or anything red this month!) will add color. Light some candles and you've got yourself a setting!

Below are the recipes and a couple of suggestions, should you decide to throw your own tea party this month – why not?

### Berry fruit salad

I loved how easy this salad was to make, and the dressing on it – so simple – was so good! It's very pretty in a bowl, as well.

- 1 lb fresh strawberries
- 8 oz fresh blueberries
- 4 oz fresh raspberries
- 4 oz fresh blackberries
- 2 c fresh cherries, pitted
- Zest of 1 small lime
- 1 T lime juice
- 1 T honey

Wash and gently dry berries and cherries, place in a large bowl. In a small bowl, whisk lime zest, juice and honey. Pour over fruit and toss gently. Refrigerate til ready to serve. Best served the same day...or the second.

### Tuna tea sandwiches

These tasted so good, and elevated a simple tuna sandwich into a delicious treat! The ingredients came together so well.

- 1 can light water-packed tuna, drained and flaked
- 1-2 T mayo
- ¼ t lemon pepper seasoning
- 4 T crumbled goat cheese
- 4 slices multigrain bread, crusts removed
- 4 large basil leaves

In small bowl combine tuna, mayo and lemon pepper. Spread 1 T goat cheese on each slice of bread. Spread two slices with tuna mixture, top with basil leaves and remaining bread. Cut in half or how you wish.

### Cucumber sandwiches

I suppose these are typical tea party sandwiches, so they must be included! They just taste crisp and good, with a little crunch!

- 16 slices high-quality soft white sandwich bread (about 1 loaf), crusts removed
- 1 English cucumber
- 8 ounces cream cheese , softened
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- Cracked black pepper , to taste

Peel the cucumber in stripes and cut into 1/8-inch thin slices using a mandolin or sharp knife. Place the slices on paper towels and sprinkle with coarse salt. Let rest for 15-30 minutes to extract moisture. Pat dry with clean paper towels.

In a medium bowl, using a handheld mixer, blend together the softened cream cheese, mayo, dill, chives, lemon juice, garlic powder, and salt.

Spread one side of each slice of bread with the herbed cream cheese. Layer cucumber slices over half of the bread slices. Season with fresh cracked black pepper, to taste. Top with remaining bread slices, cream cheese mixture down. (At this point, you'll have 8 full sandwiches.)

Using a sharp knife, cut each sandwich into quarters, pushing through the bread down to the bottom. So you have 32 tea sandwiches. Serve right away and enjoy! (recipe from Belly Full)

### Apple pie bites

These are so cute and tasty, and look pretty on a plate. They don't take long to make, at all.

- 1 pie crust
- 4 T unsalted butter
- 6 granny smith apples, cored and diced
- 1/2 c light brown sugar
- 1/2 T lemon, zested
- 2 T cornstarch
- 1 T ground nutmeg
- 8 milk caramels, chopped

Preheat oven to 350. Spray a muffin tin with nonstick spray. Roll out the pie dough and cut 12 pieces with a large round cookie cutter and place in muffin tins. In large saute pan, combine butter, apples, sugar, lemon zest, cornstarch and nutmeg. Cook til apples soften and liquid thickens. Spoon into individual muffin tins and top with chopped caramels. Bake for 30 minutes. Allow to cool before serving.

### Wilbur's chocolates

We ordered boxes of these for Christmas, and they're worth ordering all year long! These add decadence and amazing taste to any table, and look pretty in any of your small bowls! The buds are the best, a mix of dark and milk chocolate bite-size morsels. Oh my gosh, they're good! You might want a box for yourself, for Valentine's Day!

### Granola

I made a big batch of granola beforehand for party favors, for the girls to take home with them. Jars from the dollar store, and ribbons from my stash of giftwrap box. This recipe is one of my faves, from Alton Brown:

- 3 c rolled oats
- 1 c slivered almonds
- 1 c cashews
- $\frac{3}{4}$  c shredded sweet coconut
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c plus 2 T dark brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c plus 2 T maple syrup
- $\frac{1}{4}$  c vegetable oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$  t salt
- 1 c raisins

Preheat oven to 250 degrees. In a large bowl combine oats, nuts, coconut and brown sugar. In a separate bowl, combine syrup, oil and salt. Combine both mixtures and pour onto two sheet pans. Cook for 1 hour and 15 minutes, stirring every 15 minutes for even color. Remove and transfer to a large bowl, add in the raisins and mix.

Finally, we had bags for each guest with the granola inside, and a scarf. We then had scarf tying instructions and had fun adorning our bags, our necks and even our heads – the scarf was a party favor. An entire pack of scarves from Amazon is not much at all!