

## Shmanners 27: Afternoon Tea and High Tea

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**Travis:**

Hey Teresa, how do you take your podcasts?

**Teresa:**

In my ear with cream and sugar, please.

**Travis:**

That's weird. It's Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:**

Hello, internet. I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

**Teresa:**

And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

**Travis:**

And you're listening to Shmanners.

**Teresa:**

It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:**

...for ordinary occasions. Ooh, we're getting so good at that.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

How are you feeling?

**Teresa:**

I am well rested. Thank you.

**Travis:**

Yes, we just had a wonderful babymoon getaway, um, where we got to really put our shmanners to the test and stay at a very nice resort. Um, had a great time, and, you know, getting massages, chilling out, uh, I had some cocktails. Uh, it was great, it was terrific.

**Teresa:**

I had a lot of very delicious sparkling water. [laughs]

**Travis:**

This is true, you watched me have cocktails.

**Teresa:**

I did.

**Travis:**

Um, yeah. And so we're sorry the episode's a little bit late, but you know, traveling and you can only do so much, you know? We were too busy being deeply in love, so.

**Teresa:**

[laughs] We appreciate your patience, though.

**Travis:**

That is correct. Patience is a virtue, um, and, you know, we were there, we were hanging around the highfalutin rich folks I'd say, and we got to thinking about the fancy teas. And, uh, we've done a tea time or two in our lives, and, you know, we went and did our honeymoon in Scotland and we drank..

**Teresa:**

We did have tea in Scotland.

**Travis:**

A lot of tea, to the point where we went on a horseback riding expedition that ended with them... like, us sitting in a stone stable surrounded by horses drinking out of, like, a silver tea set. It was...

**Teresa:**

It was lovely.

**Travis:**

It was great, y'all. Um, and so we wanted to talk about tea. But here's the thing, you guys, I recently learned this from my beautiful wife, the difference between high tea and afternoon tea. Do you want to start there or do you want to start with a little history and work our way back to it?

**Teresa:**

Well, I would like to start with afternoon tea. Um, and later I will divulge the difference between afternoon tea and high tea.

**Travis:**

Ooh.

**Teresa:**

Because it is a bit of a misnomer if you are thinking about socioeconomic status.

**Travis:**

Okay. Well, so then let's start with...

**Teresa:**

Okay.

**Travis:**

... afternoon tea.

**Teresa:**

Afternoon tea, um, became fashionable in the early 19th Century and it is credited to Anna the 7th Duchess of Bedford in the year 1840.

**Travis:**

Oh, of course. I know of her.

**Teresa:**

You do?

**Travis:**

No. No, I do not.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

But just once I wanted to sound...

**Teresa:**

Well, at that time, it was fashionable to have your dinner by candlelight, and so, um, you would not really begin the dinner service until about 8:00 in the evening.

**Travis:**

I mean, in general, our modern day understanding of, like, meals and meal times is so very different.

**Teresa:**

Yes.

**Travis:**

Right, like we think about very structured, like, breakfast, lunch, dinner now, and that was not how it has always been.

**Teresa:**

Correct.

**Travis:**

Was that informed by the work day? That was probably informed by the work day, right?

**Teresa:**

It was, actually. Um, once the workday became a nine to five, that's when things really got a lot more regimented, where you had to take breakfast before you went to work, you would have a break in the middle of the day, and then dinner when you got home because you were famished.

**Travis:**

Excellent.

**Teresa:**

Um, but in that time, it, uh, was fashionable to have your dinner by candlelight, and so you had to wait till it got dark.

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

Um, and she found that she was quite peckish in between, uh, her- her luncheon and the dinner time, um, and so around 4:00 in the afternoon, she would ask that a tray of tea, um, some bread and butter, maybe some cakes, little fancy things that she would have around the house that people would have for guests in service anyway, um, she would ask them to bring some up to her bedroom. And she...

**Travis:**

So just like a little snack?

**Teresa:**

Just a snack, basically. Um, and it really caught on like wildfire. She began inviting her friends over for this tea time in the afternoon.

**Travis:**

I mean, it seems like it's a kind of no-brainer wonderful social experience because unlike a meal where... uh, cause I always feel this way whenever I sit down to, like, a lunch for, like, a business purpose or something, where you kind of get embarrassed to, like, eat, seriously eat in front of somebody when you're trying to have a conversation with them. Like, when do you stop and take a bite of, like, this huge meal in front of you?

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

Whereas tea, with all the finger foods and very much more bite sized, um, treats, sounds perfectly made for conversation and for a social engagement.

**Teresa:**

Exactly, and it really did turn into that. So during the 1880s, the upper class society women would actually, like, make this an outing that they would do daily. They would go over to their friends' houses, they would dress up, um, you know, in long gowns and gloves and hats, and it became quite the thing to do.

Um, it moved from her bedroom, uh, well, it moved from bedrooms, so it changed from a private affair that you would take to, uh, just stave off your hunger in between meals into a social affair. So it moved down to the formal drawing room. And I believe that's probably why people started dressing up a little more.

**Travis:**

Got it.

**Teresa:**

So then that was taken, uh, you would have this little tea time between four and five in the afternoon, um, to keep you from [laughs] being starving at dinner. Because, I mean, you mentioned this just a second ago, it really wasn't very fashionable to eat much at all.

**Travis:**

Yeah.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

I mean, I think it was, uh, not Anne Boleyn. Who am I thinking of? Let them eat cake.

**Teresa:**

That's Marie Antoinette.

**Travis:**

Marie Antoinette.

**Teresa:**

And it is, eh, also, uh, attributed incorrectly.

**Travis:**

Well, yes, but you... I knew you would know who I was thinking of. If we were playing a game, I knew you would know. Anyhow, not important. Wasn't she known for, like, having, like, broth and, like, a crust of bread while there was, like, a massive meal going on around her, right?

**Teresa:**

Uh, coming from a different court system in Austria, I believe, um, she disliked the entire, like, French court fanciness, and she preferred much plain food.

**Travis:**

Oh, gotcha. But yeah, you really didn't want to watch— You didn't want people to watch you, like, eat, you know?

**Teresa:**

Right. Yes, it was not fashionable.

**Travis:**

Like, all you can eat Golden Corral buffets were not happening.

**Teresa:**

[laughs] Right. That wasn't a thing, really. So, um, by the 1920s, this whole tea time thing was in full swing. Um, you would have— It turned into almost a party where there were lots of guests and there—

You might have, um, you might have instruments come and play instead of just putting on the Victrola or whatever, you might have singers, you might have, um, other entertainment, you would have service from servants, whereas before this, um, afternoon tea might be something that you would prepare for yourself while your servants had the day off.

So it became something that you would have on, um, Sundays so that the servants could leave and go to church and you could just have this kind of tea in the afternoon to keep you from starving when your servants were away.

**Travis:**

Let me ask you a big question here that may be so big that there's no one answer to it.

**Teresa:**

Okay.

**Travis:**

The question is, what I think of, like, the taking tea, um, doing, you know, tea time, taking a tea break, as a very European, specifically British thing.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

But I'm— You say 1920s and I'm thinking about 1920s America and we were very posh as well, we had, you know, uh, definitely an upper class, we had a first class here in America. Why... Did it take off in America and just stopped being a thing? Or did it never take off in America? I'm very curious as to why tea isn't as big a thing here.

**Teresa:**

Well, um, although I don't have any research to point to this, my inclination is to say that because America has always been a little more industrialized, a little more working class, there's a little less leisure time, and I would think



that something that you would eat between your lunch and your supper at eight, at four or five in the afternoon, was probably... you were still working.

**Travis:**

Interesting.

**Teresa:**

So, there, uh... And we'll get to that when we talk about high tea.

**Travis:**

Gotcha.

**Teresa:**

Um, so I think that that's probably why it didn't really flourish in America, but high societies definitely tried to emulate the, uh, the UK, and they definitely did take tea time, if you were affluent enough to afford it.

**Travis:**

Indeed.

**Teresa:**

Um, so as... I mean, as far as the history of afternoon tea, that's basically it. They found it, they liked it, they kept doing it.

**Travis:**

Yeah, I don't think it's evolved that much past that point, you know?

**Teresa:**

Right. Uh, but there are several different classifications of afternoon tea. Um, there's a little bit of, uh, pomp and circumstance surrounding having actual tea, so that's my next little foray.

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

Um, you are supposed to keep the kettle in the kitchen and the tea pot on the table. Um, and it is traditionally using loose leaf tea, uh, but in my

opinion, as long as you keep the, uh, the tea bags inside the kettle, I mean, sorry, inside the teapot, who's going to know? People aren't opening up the tea pot. [laughs]

**Travis:**

Is there a set of, uh, preference for, like, black tea versus green tea versus herbal tea versus, like, a white tea? Is there white tea? There is white tea, right?

**Teresa:**

Uh, yes. Yes. Very young tea is often referred to as white tea. Um, but it's, uh, it's customary to have an assortment.

**Travis:**

Excellent. And that makes sense because there's different flavors that you get from, like, an herbal versus a black tea, differing levels of caffeine you get from those.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

Yes.

**Teresa:**

So then, um, on the tea tray, so you have the tea pot that you've taken into the kitchen to fill with water and tea, then you put that on a tray. On the tray is a sugar bowl with sugar cubes and tongs, because it's never good to stick your fingers in the sugar bowl.

There is a, uh, pitcher with milk in it. Um, there is a tea strainer if you're using the loose leaf, you want to pour the tea through the strainer into the cup so that you don't get any leaves in your tea.

**Travis:**

And that's a strainer that kind of looks like a spoon net, right?

**Teresa:**

Yeah, a little bit like that. Um, then there is a bowl for used tea leaves once the tea is finished. And a pitcher of hot water is also included because people like their tea at different strengths. So you can use the hot water to dilute your own tea if you think that it is too strong.

**Travis:**

Now, do you know the answer to this question: why sugar cubes instead of just loose sugar?

**Teresa:**

It's just tradition.

**Travis:**

Just what they do. Okay.

**Teresa:**

That's what they do. In fact, um, sugar didn't used to be served in cubes, it was used in cones, often called hats, where the expression, "I'll eat my hat," comes from.

**Travis:**

What? What? Get out of town. Sugar hats? Why did we move away from sugar hats?

**Teresa:**

I don't know.

**Travis:**

That's so much more fun.

**Teresa:**

I think that cones might be harder to, like, manufacture.

**Travis:**

Okay. Fine. Whatever.

**Teresa:**

Um, and then also there was a small dish on the tray for lemon wedges and a little fork to get those lemon wedges or slices out because some people, um, don't enjoy tea, and in that case, you can use the hot water and lemon and make yourself a little lemon flavored concoction.

**Travis:**

Hot water.

**Teresa:**

Hot water. [laughs]

**Travis:**

Hot lemon water, basically.

**Teresa:**

Hot lemon water.

**Travis:**

Okay. So it sounds like those are your options, right? You either are having some form of tea or hot lemon water, you're not, like, also...

**Teresa:**

I supp—

**Travis:**

... having an... Because we had some questions from people who were like, "Can I have a soda? Can I have an alcoholic beverage? Can I have coffee?"

**Teresa:**

Well, uh, there are different iterations of tea where you can have along with the tea service you'll have a beverage offered in that way...

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

... like champagne, tea. I'll get to that.

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

I'll get to that. And then lastly, you would bring that tea tray to the table, which will be preset with teacups and saucers, forks and spoons, small plates usually within the five to seven diameter. Um, there would be napkins and then you can either have, uh, plates with your tea, sandwiches, scones, cakes, things like that, or sometimes they are served on elevated trays.

**Travis:**

Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:**

Um, so...

**Travis:**

Oh, like those tiered trays, yes.

**Teresa:**

Yeah, like a three tiered tray. Um, plus you would want to have jam and cream on the table for scones.

**Travis:**

Gotcha. So you've mentioned different forms of tea.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

What are the different forms of the afternoon tea?

**Teresa:**

Um, so there is a cream tea.

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

Which really doesn't have anything to do with the drinking of tea, because, um, you don't use cream, you use milk.

**Travis:**

Uh-huh.

**Teresa:**

Uh, cause cream often settles to the bottom and is difficult to stir in.

**Travis:**

Gross.

**Teresa:**

Um, where a cream tea is generally just the scones, the clotted cream, and the jam served with tea. So it would be, like, uh, oftentimes the scones are served on the top level because they are supposed to be served warm.

**Travis:**

Uh-huh.

**Teresa:**

So you would put a little, like, um, dome over top to keep them warm, and that really only fits on the top level of the tier. So the cream tea is just that top level of scones, cream and jam.

**Travis:**

As opposed to, like, also little sandwiches and also cookies-

**Teresa:**

Right. Right. Right. Right.

**Travis:**

... and cakes and... Gotcha.

**Teresa:**

Exactly. And then, uh, a champagne afternoon tea is often served at different, um, establishments like the Ritz, and there's a bunch of places in London that'll serve a champagne tea. Generally it's more expensive.  
[laughs]

**Travis:**

Yeah. Well.

**Teresa:**

Uh, but in that you are given a glass of champagne along with your tea, you know, for that additional charge.

**Travis:**

So if you wanted to have, like, a fancy wedding party...

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

... whether it be your bachelor or bachelorette or what have you, or maybe a birthday party where you're wanting to celebrate not just with tea, but maybe an alcoholic beverage, you want to request a champagne tea.

**Teresa:**

Right. Um, or it sometimes is called, uh, sherry tea, cause then, cause sherry is a little more traditionally English.

**Travis:**

Gotcha.

**Teresa:**

Um, and then...

**Travis:**

But you're not, like, pouring some whisky in your tea, it's not— If you're going for the... Because here's the thing, what it's sounding to me like, and please tell me if I'm in the wrong direction here, it's sounding to me like if you're going to do this afternoon tea...

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

... you're doing it because it feels very fancy and posh.

**Teresa:**

Yes.

**Travis:**

And so if you wanted the full experience of it, you want to couple it with something like sherry and champagne, not like beer and whisky. While I would prefer that to champagne or sherry...

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

... I feel like doing that, you have to take into... you have to acknowledge that you're kind of taking a little bit of the seeming poshness away from it.

**Teresa:**

Right. And also, uh, this was typically a ladies social occasion, and, um, until the cocktail was really introduced in America in the 1920s or shortly before that, um, ladies didn't drink, really. I mean, high class ladies, of course...

**Travis:**

Were not caught drinking.

**Teresa:**

... were not caught [laughs] drinking spirits and beer. They usually stuck to wine or sherry, um, and that was, you know, those sort of drinks were the male pastime that you would have after dinner, you would have your, um, spirits and port and things like that after dinner.

**Travis:**



Gotcha. So we've got the cream tea, the champagne tea. Are there other versions?

**Teresa:**

Um, I mean, really as far as afternoon tea goes, there's a general sort of, um, service that happens where you'll have finger sandwiches, and those can include cucumber sandwiches, egg mayonnaise sandwiches with watercress, um, smoked salmon.

**Travis:**

But once again, kind of easy, um, not easy, sand... but, you know, easy to consume sandwiches. You know what I mean?

**Teresa:**

Right. Yes. You know, crusts cut off, cut in small pieces so that you could eat them, um...

**Travis:**

You're not dealing with a Dagwood situation at this point. Yeah.

**Teresa:**

Exactly. [laughs] Exactly. Um, and then you would have, you know, your warm scones with cream and preserves, talked about that. And then a variety of cakes and pastries and little, uh, mostly finger sized.

You wouldn't want much that you would have to cut, although if you are serving a smaller tea service, a small cake that could be easily divided into four to six slices.

**Travis:**

Is this where you get petit fours? Are petit fours a tea food?

**Teresa:**

Um, you could certainly serve petit four. But...

**Travis:**

Well, you said it better than I did.

**Teresa:**

But, um...

**Travis:**

I only know about it from Great British Bake Off.

**Teresa:**

It's French.

**Travis:**

Say it one more time.

**Teresa:**

Petit four.

**Travis:**

Petit four. I did bad. You did good. Okay, let's move on. I'm embarrassed now.

**Teresa:**

[laughs] Uh, you could serve those small things as long as they were, um, easily handleable.

**Travis:**

But you're looking for not something you have to take a bite of and put back down on your plate.

**Teresa:**

Exactly. One to two bites is, uh, is how you would want to eat it. And speaking of, um, there seems to be, and I did not know this, there seems to be an etiquette to the eating of scones.

**Travis:**

You throw it up in the air and you catch it.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

Man, wouldn't it be crazy if that was it? Like you got to lick it first and then put it back down on your plate and wait 10 minutes and then you can eat it.

**Teresa:**

[laughs] Um, I suppose that I always thought they were, um, served in the way of, like, a Victoria sandwich, where you would have the scone divided and then put the cream and preserves on and then kind of eat it like a cupcake in several bites.

Um, but I have found in my research that it is encouraged that you cut the scone in half, like you would for a Victoria sandwich, and then break off pieces as you butter... as you, sorry, use the cream and the jam individually.

So like eating a dinner roll, where you wouldn't put the butter in between and make a little bread and butter sandwich, uh, you're supposed to break off individual pieces to eat one at a time.

**Travis:**

Interesting.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

Okay, so we've teased it at the beginning of the episode. We did afternoon tea. So is high tea even fancier than that? Like, what makes it high above the afternoon tea?

**Teresa:**

Um.

**Travis:**

Is it just for queens and kings?

**Teresa:**

No, the size of the table.

**Travis:**

What? Come again?

**Teresa:**

So high tea is called high tea because it is served at a table, not because it is eaten by the upper socioeconomic class.

**Travis:**

And that's the common misconception that people think afternoon tea is for the low class and high tea must be for the high class.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

When in fact, it's the other way around.

**Teresa:**

Afternoon tea was served in drawing rooms, so you would have sofas and side tables.

**Travis:**

Maybe a Chaise lounge.

**Teresa:**

Maybe a Chaise lounge or— And, you know, coffee tables, lower tables. And then high tea is more like dinner.

**Travis:**

And...

**Teresa:**

So it's served at a table.

**Travis:**

And you've described, like, uh, do you stand at the table? Do you sit, like, at stools at the table? But basically it's like their... it's much more practical and

purposeful of, like, we need a boost of caffeine and some food in our tummies, and so we're standing there and we're eating and we're doing a thing and it's not so much of the fancy social occasion that afternoon tea is, it's more of a purposeful, "We need some food. We need a drink."

**Teresa:**

You don't even have to stand. It's basically dinner, Travis.

**Travis:**

Oh, really?

**Teresa:**

You would just, uh... So what happened was, um, in the 19th Century, that's when Britain became, uh, more highly industrialized at the time, um, and so people who wanted to have tea after coming home from working wanted a more substantial meal that required service at a table.

So, um, the working class households would often have, you know, hot and filling sort of stews and pastis and sausage rolls and things like that at the table for tea, um, and it was basically dinner.

**Travis:**

Is that, like, what you hear, like, supper, and... It just sounds like a supper idea. I have no idea what the breakdown. We'll have to do...

**Teresa:**

I don't know what the difference between supper and dinner and...

**Travis:**

We're going to do a whole old timey meal thing. Yeah.

**Teresa:**

We'll have to... that'll be our next episode, I think.

**Travis:**

But this was not, this was not like lace gloves and...

**Teresa:**

No.

**Travis:**

... parasol and stuff?

**Teresa:**

No, not really. Um, I mean, although it is traditional to dress for dinner, so you would change out of your work clothes and get into dinner clothes, um, I don't believe that there was any sort of that formality as for high tea.

**Travis:**

In this day and age, do you think that while there's still very clearly a real definition and a, uh, divide between the two concepts, do people advertise stuff as high tea and call stuff high tea even though it's not, like, um, because they're really doing an afternoon tea but they want it to sound fancy? I just, I feel like until you told me that...

**Teresa:**

Well, because the two are so often convoluted and merged and switched, um, you'll find hotels catering to American tourists will often advertise a real afternoon tea as high tea because that's what people expect of it.

**Travis:**

Yes.

**Teresa:**

Um...

**Travis:**

But- but they have not actually become interchangeable, that's just like when we talked about in the hotel episodes where we said, like, European style and American style, but that's not really what they meant, those are just the terms that they used to sell it to people.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

Gotcha.

**Teresa:**

Yes. Um...

**Travis:**

So then one of the questions we got that I didn't include in our questions segment was, if you hear someone say afternoon tea or high tea when they mean the other one, or if you've called it that, should it be corrected? Or do you think it's like, "Yeah, you know what I meant." You know, like if someone says, "I'm going to high tea, I feel so fancy."

**Teresa:**

I am not of the opinion that you should correct people on those sorts of things, um, just because especially here in America, the terms are so often interswitched, um, that it, really, once you look at the menu, you can decipher if it is a high tea or just an afternoon tea or if it's a cream tea or a full tea, you know, all of these different things you'll be able to decipher from the offerings.

So for example, um, if there is on the menu things like pies and pastis, sausage rolls, meat, cheese, anything more substantial than the typical, you know, kind of just bread and butter idea, uh, that is going to be a high tea.

**Travis:**

Gotcha.

**Teresa:**

Um, and what I seem to have found is another reason that it might be called high tea is because the actual amount of food required a table.

**Travis:**

Gotcha.

**Teresa:**

Which is higher than your sitting room tables.

**Travis:**

Okay. Well, uh, we're going to head into the questions segment in a moment, but first, here's a word from another Max Fun show.

[theme music plays]

**Adam:**

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**Travis:**

Okay, we got a lot of questions on this one. So we'll try to hit as many as we can. Some of them we've already done. So if I say one we've already done, we'll just move right along. This is from Sam on Twitter. What is the appropriate number of cups you should have? Is it rude to have too many?

**Teresa:**

Um, as far as drinking the actual tea goes, I think as long as you're enjoying it, you should have as much as you like. Now, according to me etiquette research, um, one should never use the tea to wash down food. So it should always be you eat a little bit, completely swallow, drink a little bit.

Um, and so as long as you are enjoying just drinking your tea and tea is still being offered, um, you should be able to enjoy as much as you like. Typically, a tea service, uh, will end at five, so that really only gives you an hour or so to drink tea. So whatever you can drink [laughs] in an hour, I suppose.

**Travis:**



And your goal is not to drink as much... like, you're not slamming the tea, right? Like, it's all... it sounds to me like all of this has become a social excuse.

**Teresa:**

Exactly. Exactly.

**Travis:**

So if you're keeping your mouth full of tea and food, you're probably not doing it right.

**Teresa:**

You should be sociable, yes.

**Travis:**

Okay. Um, this question is from, oh...Kogimin? I don't know. Weird Twitter name.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

"Um, are you supposed to eat your fill at tea? Is it like lunch or is it more like a bunch of apps before dinner?"

**Teresa:**

I would say it's more like a bunch of apps before dinner. You should not... It's to stave off hunger, not to satiate.

**Travis:**

Okay. Unless you're doing a high tea.

**Teresa:**

Exactly, which that is like dinner.

**Travis:**

Gotcha. Um, this is from Shay the Bearded. "I like my tea way stronger than most people, should I make two pots or go somewhere in the middle?"

**Teresa:**

So I mentioned this a little earlier, what you should do is you should make the tea as strong as you prefer, um, and serve it along with an extra pot of hot water so that anyone who doesn't like their tea that strong can dilute it themselves to their own liking.

**Travis:**

And this is an interesting thing, because when I think about caffeine intake, like a coffee or a tea, I think about it at breakfast along with, you know, my breakfast meal or in the early part of the day.

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

I don't think about taking in caffeine after, like, three o'clock. And so it seems to me like if you're looking for a caffeine boost, you would do it in the morning, and then want slightly weaker tea in the afternoon so that, you know, you can sleep.

**Teresa:**

Well, sure, that makes sense for today's day and age. Um, but remember the afternoon tea was kind of a stop between dinner at eight and lunch earlier in the day, so you wanted to stay up possibly 'til 10 just sitting at the table eating dinner.

**Travis:**

Gotcha. This question is from Cammy, um, "A local shmancy hotel does a daily tea service for 50 dollars. What should I wear?"

**Teresa:**

Um, you should dress to feel appropriate in that shmancy hotel.

**Travis:**

'Cause it's not for comfort. Once again, this is a thing you're doing, this is an activity.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

And just like if you were going to play sports, you wouldn't just dress to be comfortable, you would dress appropriately for the sport.

**Teresa:**

Exactly. Um, so I would recommend, um, dress pants and a blouse, blazer maybe, or if you prefer, um, a skirt or a dress, but it is not, like, leisurewear, you want to be one step above that.

**Travis:**

If you know that it's, like, a shmancy hotel and you're paying to be there and it is definitely afternoon tea, is there a risk of being too overdressed?

**Teresa:**

I don't believe so. Um, from different sites that I've looked at and actually friends who have, around the world, who have gone to afternoon tea, it is definitely a fancy dress occasion.

**Travis:**

Uh-huh.

**Teresa:**

Um, I am of the persuasion where...

**Travis:**

But not fancy dress like a costume.

**Teresa:**

Not fancy dress like a costume, excuse me. [laughs] But, um, I enjoy dressing a little vintage, a little retro, um, and so I would definitely play that up...

**Travis:**

So you don't have to do, like, Downton Abbey fancy dress.

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

Like you're not popping a bustle on or anything.

**Teresa:**

No.

**Travis:**

But you should feel fancy. Once again, lean into it.

**Teresa:**

Yeah.

**Travis:**

If you're going to go do this fancy thing, right?

**Teresa:**

It's an occasion.

**Travis:**

If you ain't doing it every day, make it special. Um, this is from Cherry. Um, "Is tea like wine in that you're supposed to have black or white tea with certain foods?"

**Teresa:**

Not to my knowledge. Not to me discovery. Although, um, you should offer different teas with your tea service. Um, traditionally I believe that Earl Gray is offered. Um...

**Travis:**

You should, especially if you get to do it yourself, always offer a herbal no caffeine, because there are people who are allergic to caffeine...

**Teresa:**

Mm-hmm.

**Travis:**

... or as I mentioned, people who maybe at five o'clock in the afternoon don't want to be intaking caffeine. Um, and you know, like you said, there's the hot lemon water option.

**Teresa:**

Right.

**Travis:**

But maybe they want to have tea, they just don't want the caffeine. If you are in control of it, I highly recommend offering a non-caffeinated option.

**Teresa:**

Right. So, uh, traditionally an Earl Gray is offered, usually a Darjeeling is offered, um, and, uh, you know, and then various other Asian teas as well, um, Assam and Lapsang and other types of teas. So I think that with the service, you will find some sort of tea that you enjoy, although they need not go with specific foods.

**Travis:**

Do you think... We're kind of talking about two different things, right? The difference between if you were going to have an afternoon tea in your home for your friends versus if you were attending an afternoon tea at a, like, hotel or restaurant.

Is it gauche to, like, sit down at the afternoon tea at a restaurant or a hotel and ask for a non-caffeinated option or request an- or see if they have a specific kind of tea that you want? Or do you just kind of take what you get?

**Teresa:**

I think that at the finer establishments, you'll find that they'll bring you a tea box and you'll be able to select whatever tea you like and, um, hopefully you'll see the type that you enjoy. Uh, but yeah, if you're having a tea at your house, why not have what you like?

**Travis:**

Yeah. An excellent point, Teresa. Okay, so this was a big one. We got this one a lot. This was from Jessica. "Why pinkies up?"

**Teresa:**

Well, according to my research, what I have found is that the pinkies up originates from a time when tea cups were quite small.

**Travis:**

Uh-huh.

**Teresa:**

And so it was literally impossible for you to wrap three or four fingers around the handle of the cup, or in even earlier times before teacups had handles, wrap it around the entirety of the cup.

Because tea comes from... most tea comes from China and the Chinese are accredited with creating the actual pottery, um, and so before they were designed with handles, the Chinese designed them without handles.

**Travis:**

Gotcha.

**Teresa:**

Um, and so putting the pinky up or even the ring finger and pinky is more to kind of balance the tea, really, in your hand.

**Travis:**

And it seems to just, like, keep them out of the way rather than, like, wrapping your whole hand around the cup like a monster.

**Teresa:**

[laughs] Not like a monster.

**Travis:**

Well, I would be like a monster.

**Teresa:**

You have quite larger hands, yes. Um, but it just kind of helps to balance the weight of the tea.

**Travis:**

But it's not like a thing... It's not— It always felt to me like pinkies up was a thing that American movies did to make fun of British fancy people.

**Teresa:**

I believe that I have heard of that, yes.

**Travis:**

Okay. I don't think I'm far off, cause it seems to me like, I don't know that pinkies up is a real thing that you'll get chastised for not doing in a fancy establishment, so much as it'll look like you're making fun of the other people there.

**Teresa:**

Yes. Um, but like I said, teacups are quite small, um, and so you may not have physical room for those last one or two fingers on the teacup.

**Travis:**

Let's put it this way, if you get invited to go to a fancy tea with some friends, don't be the person who yells, "pinkies up," and thinks it's very funny.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

You are at a fancy establishment and you should not do that. Um, this question is from Lee. "Milk before or after the tea is poured?"

**Teresa:**

Again, uh, this tradition comes from the pottery that was used, um, before there was the harder cast, double fired pottery, um, you would often have to temper the glass before you poured the tea in because you would shatter it if it was so hot.

So that's where the tradition of putting milk in first came, um, you would put the milk in the cup first in order to temper it, get it ready for hotter liquids, and then you would put the tea in. Um, at this point, because most, uh, fine

china is double fired already, there really is no need to differentiate. Whatever you like to do.

**Travis:**

Does it have any effect on the tea or the flavor or anything?

**Teresa:**

Um, well you are able to tell how strong the tea is if you pour the tea in first. Um, so if you like your tea a little stronger, I would recommend that you pour the tea in first, take a look at the color of the tea.

If it's to your liking, add less milk. Um, I like milk in my tea. Um, I think that it... Uh, well, I mean, it makes it taste a little more creamy. Um, I often find that some teas leave my mouth dryer than other teas after I've swallowed it, so the milk in there helps cut that for me.

So if you like stronger tea, I suggest you put the tea in first and then the milk. Um, but if it's not something you're particular about, you can put the milk in first.

**Travis:**

Okay. Um, this is from Rachel, "am I supposed to hold the saucer in one hand, teacup in the other? Or leave the saucer on the table and put the cup all the way down between dainty sips?"

**Teresa:**

Um, so it depends on the- the place you are having tea. If you're having an afternoon tea where you are sitting on couches, it is recommended that you take the tea with the saucer into your lap, place the saucer on your lap and lift the teacup to your lips and then place it back down on your saucer, on your lap. Um, but if you're having high tea where you're at a table, um, you can leave the saucer right there on the table the whole time.

**Travis:**

Why is the saucer there? I used to think it was to put your teabag on, but now I'm thinking that if you're serving a loose leaf tea or tea in the, um, in the tea... is it just there to have a thing to put your cup on for fancy's sake?



**Teresa:**

Well, it does help to balance when you're putting it in your lap, certainly. Um, you wouldn't want to put a cup of hot tea just between your legs, um...

**Travis:**

This is true, yes.

**Teresa:**

[laughs] So, if you're having it on a couch, then you would definitely want the saucer to just keep your tea away from your lap. Um, but I believe that it is to place your stirring spoon on.

**Travis:**

Okay.

**Teresa:**

So if you do have your tea with milk and sugar, or, uh, some people just take tea with lemon, which is why the lemon is also offered, um, if you do that then you need a place to put your spoon after you've stirred it all together.

**Travis:**

I have heard that, speaking of stirring, that it is incredibly bad form that, while, stirring to clink one's spoon against the sides of the teacup. Is that true?

**Teresa:**

Um, while I didn't see anything to that effect, I did see a recommendation where when you are stirring tea, you are not to take it in a circular motion, um, but in a vertical stir, where you would take it from, like the six o'clock position and fold that liquid up to the 12 o'clock position.

**Travis:**

I see.

**Teresa:**

So it's more of a folding, creating waves type thing in your cup, more than a whirlpool.

**Travis:**

I would just think that I think there's some kind of general knowledge that should one ever have, uh, tea with the queen, you do not clink-clink-clink-clink—

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

...your spoon on...

**Teresa:**

It does sound a little abrasive.

**Travis:**

Yeah. It sounds like the queen would go, "Please don't do that."

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

"I don't... My corgis hate that." Um, Amy asks, uh, "when serving formal tea, does the loose leaf tea versus teabag matter?" And we talked about this a little bit. My question is, does it really m... Like when you're getting into setting out an afternoon tea for friends, does that really matter?

**Teresa:**

Well, my opinion is that if you take the teacup... I'm sorry. If you take the teapot into the kitchen to fill it up with hot water, no one is going to see what sort of tea you put in the teapot.

**Travis:**

Yeah, I've done loose leaf tea before. Um, it is a much bigger commitment than just going to the store and buying some tea bags. And, like, unless you are the type of person who I think already does loose leaf tea and loose leaf tea is a lifestyle choice that you have made, I don't think for a single event of afternoon tea with friends you need to go buy a bunch of loose leaf tea.

**Teresa:**

Right. And, I mean, in your own home, you certainly can then offer, if you have teabags, an assortment of teas to your friends. So there definitely is an, um, advantage to that. If everybody wants a different type of tea all at once, they can all have different types of teas.

**Travis:**

Um, this question, uh, is from Faye, but it's actually from five year old Max, "What do you do when you are done but you still have tea in your cup?"

**Teresa:**

Um, when you are finished, and you don't have to finish all of the pastries and things and tea and all of that such, um...

**Travis:**

And in fact, if you have, uh, if you're— Especially if you're doing loose leaf tea, you should not finish your cup all the way, cause there's probably some leaves and just general...

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

... detritus— That's why I...

**Teresa:**

Probably.

**Travis:**

That's why I never finish a beer, and Teresa makes fun of me every time [laughs], cause I just assume there's stuff in the bottom of the beer.

**Teresa:**

Um, a good signal is to place the spoon directly at the top of your saucer, so at the, let's see...

**Travis:**

Kind of across 11 and one.

**Teresa:**

Yeah. As with your teacup on the saucer, as high on top as you can. So up on top of the saucer.

**Travis:**

Got it.

**Teresa:**

And, uh, then your napkin on the table to the left of your place setting.

**Travis:**

But, once again, cause it's fancy, it's not about finishing anything.

**Teresa:**

Right. You shouldn't feel like you have to finish anything. This sort of afternoon tea especially is to really stave off hunger, not to fill yourself up.

**Travis:**

Excellent. I think that's going to do it for us this week. Uh, we want to say thank you for listening. Thank you for sharing this episode. Um, and thank you for all your wonderful questions. I feel like we got a lot of great questions on this episode.

If you would like to contribute questions for future episodes, every week we will post on Twitter @Shmatterscast, S-H-M-A-N-N-E-R-S, what our topic is going to be as well as posting it in our Facebook group and the Maximum Fun Facebook group so that you can submit your questions on that topic. And then, uh, we will answer them as best we can.

You should join that Facebook group. It's very wonderful and people have more and more started discussing amongst themselves and building more of kind of a forum atmosphere.

**Teresa:**

And being oh, so polite. Thank you all so much.

**Travis:**

It's been wonderful. We've very much appreciated it. Um, we also want you to check out all the other amazing shows on maximumfun.org. There's a ton on there. You're going to find one that you like.

Uh, and I would like to push cause we just listened to it and I thought it was, well, it's so very pleasant. Our friend Lin-Manuel Miranda, a guest on an episode of Still Buffering, where they talked about, like, growing up doing theater and, uh, Sydnee and Rileigh, and Teylor talked about so many wonderful Huntington memories that I could remember from, you know, actually being there...

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

... and Lin talking about his history of, uh, of theater and everything. It was absolutely wonderful. Everyone should check it out.

**Teresa:**

Uh, if you enjoy our program, I would encourage you to please go to iTunes. Please rate and subscribe. Um, those ratings and subscriptions really do help us.

**Travis:**

Um, and you know, if you're just looking for a simple, quick way to help out, every week we will post a tweet about this episode, and if you just click retweet, it goes a long way and helps get the message out there.

Um, we also want to say thank you to Brent "Brentalfloss" Black, uh, he made our intro and outro music, which is available as a ringtone in iTunes. Just through your Apple device, go into the iTunes store and search Shmanners.

Uh, we also want to say thank you to Kayla M. Wasil who designed our logo. And I also want to say, I've— Just during this outro, I've really been enjoying the sound of my own voice, um, because I want to...

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

... once again brag about our amazing Ear Trumpet Labs microphones. They are not paying me to say this, I am just a really big fan. And so many people ask me what kind of microphone I use, I want them to know, it is an Ear Trumpet Labs microphone.

**Teresa:**

And they look so gosh darn cool.

**Travis:**

They do. They're very cool looking microphones. Um, we also want to say, you know, our general thank you to Emily Post, just for everything.

**Teresa:**

[laughs]

**Travis:**

Uh, and thank you again for listening. So join us again next week.

**Teresa:**

No RSVP required.

**Travis:**

You've been listening to Shmanners.

**Teresa:**

Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

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