

INVITING IDEAS

Spend a lazy afternoon sipping iced tea



RUTH MOSSOK JOHNSTON

Tea time over ice — not in "Jolly Old England." America's contribution to the tea craze, aside from the Boston Tea Party, was cool and refreshing Iced Tea.

First served in 1904 at the St. Louis World Fair, iced tea is hot! It's available bottled, canned, and boxed in a variety of flavors including tropical and lemon.

Hot summer days make me thirsty for iced tea and the company of dear friends. Pamper your guests with small

sandwiches filled with lemon flavored soft spreadable cheese or lemon curd. Slice the bread into interesting shapes with cookie cutters. Add a beautifully arranged platter of sliced, seasonal fruit, some fresh fruit puree on top, and serve with water biscuits. Mix and match iced teas to complement the foods you're serving.

Instead of serving lemon wedges with iced tea, mix lemonade and iced tea together in equal portions for a refreshing drink. A fresh sprig of mint will also wake up the flavor of iced tea. Brew some black tea with freshly peeled and sliced ginger root.

Ice cubes made with lemonade will also zip up the taste of iced tea. Sun-brewed tea, with the zest of citrus fruit is another possibility. Add some rose water or orange blossom water to a pitcher of iced tea to impart an international-ethnic flair. Brewed herbal teas and flavored iced teas make refreshing drinks.

Here are some tips for making sun-brewed tea. Start with cold water — always use a glass container — 6 tea bags to a quart-size pitcher. Place the container in the sun; remove tea bags when desired strength is achieved.

Refrigerated tea tips: Start with room-temperature water — a glass container works best — 6 tea bags to a quart-sized pitcher. Place in the refrigerator for at least three hours. Remove the tea bags — iced tea will last a few days if kept refrigerated.

To make lemon-flavored cheese — add Neufchatel cream cheese or any other spreadable to blender or food processor bowl fitted with the steel blade — add fresh lemon juice and some grated peel, to taste, a dash of sugar and process until well mixed.

Sunkist offers a lemonade kit — a great grouping of lemon tools including a grater, juicer, and recipe book for \$5.95. The price includes tax and postage. Send check or money order payable to "Sunkist Lemon-Aid Kit" to:

Sunkist, Lemon-Aid Kit, P.O. Box 4587, Overland Park, KS 66204. Call 1-800-CITRUS-5 for information.

HOMEMADE LEMON CURD

Juice and grated rind of 5 lemons

1 1/2 cups sugar

1 cup butter, cut into bits

5 eggs or 10 egg yolks beaten

In a double boiler combine lemon juice, lemon rind, sugar and butter. Set over medium heat and continue to stir until the butter has melted and everything is well mixed.

Add fresh eggs or yolks (whichever is preferred) and whisk briskly to combine. Set aside whisk and continue to stir with a wooden spoon until the lemon mixture coats the spoon. Do not let the lemon mixture boil — it will curdle!

Strain the lemon mixture through a fine sieve to remove the rind. The mixture will appear thick and creamy. Let the mixture cool and keep refrigerated.

SUGAR-DUSTED FLOWERS

2 egg whites

2 tablespoons superfine sugar, plus

additional for dusting

Whole edible flowers — purple chive flowers, marigolds, nasturtiums or

pansies, washed, stems removed
New paint brush (relatively small for painting leaves)

A piece of fine mesh screen or fine mesh strainer

In a mixing bowl, beat the egg whites and sugar on high speed for approximately 1 1/2 minutes or until the mixture forms a small-bubbled foam.

Carefully dip the flowers into the egg mixture until evenly coated. Remove the flowers from the mixture and set stem side down on a wire cooling rack, have something beneath it to catch the drippings.

Gently brush off any excess foam — the coating should appear like a sheen.

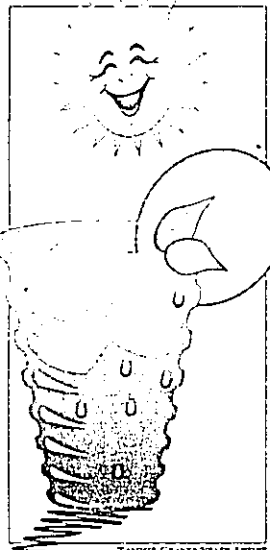
Place the flowers into a small bowl of superfine sugar to coat the bottoms.

Using a fine meshed screen or a strainer, lightly sift the superfine sugar onto the tops of the flowers — if there are bare spots, brush on more egg mixture and repeat the sifting process.

Gently set the flowers aside to dry at room temperature.

For best results, prepare dusted flowers the day of your party.

Ruth Mossok Johnston is an author and food columnist who lives in Franklin. To leave a Voice Mail message for Ruth, dial (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1902.



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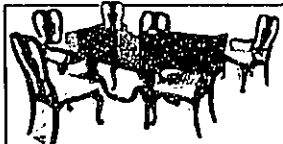


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