



Tea Time in Ireland



By Nina Bonito Romine · The Kobuk



Expert Contributor

When we think tea, we think England, but do the Irish enjoy tea as much as the British do? Maybe even more so. The Irish drink tea at almost all hours of the day; morning, mid-morning, afternoon, tea with the evening meal and even more tea at bedtime! At four to six cups a day, it's safe to say that "taking tea" is serious business.

Perhaps the most favored tea in Ireland is the Irish Breakfast blend. Its Assam black content lends Irish Breakfast a malty flavor making it more robust than English Breakfast but not as strong as Scottish Breakfast. It's a delightful activity to host a tasting and discover each blend's subtleties.

There has long been an argument among tea drinkers as to the proper way to serve tea: with or without milk. Some say the tradition of drinking milk with one's tea was started in an effort to preserve one's expensive, and often fragile, china teacups. Adding milk prior to pouring the boiling beverage directly in helped save the china from cracking.



Would you like to enjoy a cup of Irish Breakfast Tea? It's quite simple!

1. Fill your kettle with fresh water and bring to a boil. If you are serving your tea from a teapot, pour some of the boiled water in the pot, swirl to heat the pot and discard.
2. Add one teaspoon of loose tea per person, and one for the pot, directly into your teapot.
3. Top your pot with the boiled water and steep 3-4 minutes, but no longer than 5.
4. Fill 1/3 of each teacup with milk or cream.
5. Pour the Irish Breakfast through a strainer into each teacup and sweeten to taste.

Top o' the morning (midday, afternoon or evening) to you!

Here is a lovely Irish Tea Cake recipe to accompany your cuppa.

Irish Tea Cake

Ingredients:

- 1/2 c butter, softened
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 c white sugar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 c milk
- 1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 c powdered sugar
- 1 3/4 c all-purpose flour

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350F
2. Grease and flour a 9" cake pan or loaf pan. In a medium bowl, beat together the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
3. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then stir in the vanilla.
4. Combine the flour, baking powder and salt.
5. Add the dry ingredients gradually, alternating with the milk.
6. If the batter is too stiff, add up to two tablespoons of additional milk.
7. Spread the batter evenly into the pan and bake for about 30 minutes until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.
8. Allow the cake to cool in the pan for about an hour before turning it out onto a serving plate.
9. Dust with powdered sugar.
10. Invite a friend, pour a cup of Irish Breakfast and enjoy a good visit together!

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