78 Great Recipes & Ideas for Winter

Valentine's Day Tea Parties

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America's Living-History Teas

Notable Venues of the Eastern United States

By Terri Cook

Since December 16, 1773, American history has been inextricably linked with tea. On that evening, a group of boisterous Bostonians, some disguised as Mohawk Indians, boarded three ships anchored in the harbor and dumped several hundred chests of black Bohea tea overboard to protest British taxation, which helped spark the American Revolution.
The stately Tudor Place mansion was built by tobacco merchant Thomas Peter and his wife, Martha Custis Peter—granddaughter of Martha Washington—after they received an $8,000 legacy from her step-grandfather, George Washington. Planned by the same architect who designed the original U.S. Capitol, Tudor Place is internationally recognized as an outstanding example of American neoclassical architecture.

Since its completion in 1816, Tudor Place has hosted six generations of the prominent Peter family plus many eminent guests. Following the death of its last private owner, Tudor Place opened to the public in 1988.

Tours of the home, which showcases the largest public collection of Martha and George Washington artifacts outside Mount Vernon, are available hourly Tuesday through Sunday.

This beautiful estate offers interesting historical teas and tours throughout the year, including a spring Cherry Blossom Tea, a Mother’s Day Tea that explores tea etiquette with a costumed interpreter, and an Independence Day Family Tea, when children dress in period clothing and learn to take tea with a “Martha” docent. Tudor Place also hosts Fall Harvest teas, Chocolate-House-Making teas, and festive end-of-the-year Holiday teas, as well as a luscious Valentine’s Day Tea & Chocolate Tasting during which participants learn about the 18th-century tools used to convert cacao beans into drinking chocolate, a popular beverage during the Revolutionary War when Patriots boycotted British tea.

Held in the estate’s 1870s Victorian Dower Townhouse, each gathering begins with a traditional sit-down meal featuring food commonly served during the Victorian era. This includes tea sandwiches such as chicken salad on freshly baked bread, mouthwatering scones, petite desserts, and fresh fruit, as well as two or three seasonal tea blends. Spring teas feature a Cherry Blossom and Rose Tea; in winter, Tudor Place offers Peppermint or Chocolate Hazelnut, as well as a special Cupid’s Arrow blend for Valentine’s Day.

Following the delicious repast, guests take an extended mansion tour that highlights tea taking during the Federal period and views historic tea equipment, including tea bricks, Martha Washington’s tea table and stool, and a collection of 20th-century teapots.