

It's Time for a *Spring Fling*

The sleepy lull of the winter solstice has finally come to an end. Whisk away the cobwebs, pack away the parka and haul out the patio furniture--spring is underway and not a moment too soon! Everywhere you turn, the earth is teeming with life. It is an unabashed season of rebirth; an awakening of the dormant spirit that calls for celebration.

Now is the perfect time to welcome the outside world back into your home. Plan an afternoon tea with friends and neighbors who've been in hibernation these past few months. An afternoon tea gives you the perfect excuse to 1) get your spring cleaning done 2) use your seldom seen china and silver and 3) pretend you're a British royal and wear a fashionable hat.

Of course, Americans have favored coffee over tea since 1773, so you'll want to have both available. Additionally, offer guests finger sandwiches and sweets. The following recipe tops a shortbread-type base with the sweet goodness of strawberry preserves, popcorn for an added whole grain bonus and drizzled chocolate for an elegant touch.

Popcorn Strawberry Bars

Yield: 24 bars

- 4 cups popped popcorn
- 2 cups flour
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 cup (2 sticks) butter, cut into pieces
- 1 egg white
- 1 (10 oz.) jar strawberry preserves
- 1 cup chocolate chips

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9" x 13" pan; set aside.
- Process flour and confectioners' sugar in food processor several seconds. Add butter and process until dough comes together.
- Press mixture evenly into prepared pan. Lightly brush egg white on top of the mixture. Bake 25 minutes, or until golden.
- Immediately spread preserves evenly over warm crust. Press popcorn into preserves; let cool.
- Melt chocolate chips in small zip lock freezer bag. Heat in microwave 30 seconds, or until melted.
- Snip corner of bag and drizzle chocolate over cooled popcorn.
- Cool and cut into bars.



Tea Party Popcorn

Yield: 2 1/2 quarts

- 2 1/2 quarts popped popcorn
- 1/4 cup melted butter
- 2 tablespoons instant lemon-flavored iced tea mix
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- Put freshly popped popcorn in a large bowl.
- Drizzle butter over it and toss.
- Combine tea and sugar.
- Add to buttered popcorn and toss again.

