

Ragroof Tea Dances

Our suggestions for a smooth 'Tea Time'

Milk and two sugars please

'Afternoon tea' is a tradition dating back to the early 1800s. Needless to say an audience of tea dancers have some expectations for this very British ritual! To manage these expectations it is important to plan well for the teatime section of the Ragroof Tea Dance.

We run Ragroof Tea Dances weekly year-round in many different sorts of venues both indoor and outdoor, so we have a great deal of experience and are here to help and advise on what we feel works best; although we must also stress that the tea time catering is the responsibility of the venue/producer not Ragroof.

First suggestion: make clear in your marketing whether tea & cake (and sandwiches if these are also planned) will be included in the entrance fee, or if these extras will be at additional cost.

If the cost is additional to the entrance charge, we will announce that at the beginning of our Tea Dance, and we will clarify the price and when and how teatime happens. In all cases, we have found that the system that works best is that there is a fixed teatime, and that tea and cakes are ONLY served at this time. There are good 'health & safety' reasons as well as aesthetic reasons for this. This fixed Tea Time is usually 1 hour after the start of a Ragroof Tea Dance – e.g. for a 2pm start, tea at 3pm – and we have a little tea time ritual called The Entrance of the Cakes, involving Ragroof dancers in tails and 'nippy' outfits 'dancing' the cakes around the room, which denotes clearly that tea time has begun. We end teatime formally 20 minutes later with a dance routine.

Option 1: Cake served (and/or purchased) from a main counter, tea served to table

Option 2: Tea and cake pre-ordered (paid for on arrival to the tea dance OR included in the entrance fee) and served to the tables by volunteers.

Carrying hot tea across the dance floor can lead to dangerous collisions between dancers and boiling tea! We therefore usually suggest that audience members do not carry tea, but that only the workers/volunteers do so. We find bringing a teapot to a pre-laid table and allowing people to pour tea themselves really makes life easier and more enjoyable. Sometimes this is not possible for all guests but as many as possible served at a table is best.

Please make sure you have enough workers/volunteers to assist in 'Tea Time' as this is not Ragroof Theatre's responsibility.

It is the responsibility of the venue/producer to hire/provide ~

- * 1 tea pot per table
- * 1 sugar bowl per table
- * 1 milk jug per table
- * 1 large cake plate per table
- * Cups, saucers and tea spoon (1 per person)
- * Side plates and paper napkins (1 per person)
- * Float of change- especially £1 and £2 coins (if charging for tea and cakes)

Tea urns ~ extremely important

Do make sure your urns are the right size to cater for audience numbers. You must have enough tea urns to serve tea to everyone at the same time. A rough guide is a 10-litre tea urn will provide tea for 75 cups. In most cases we would suggest two large urns would be needed

Ragroof can [if requested one week in advance] provide ~

20 cake stands / cake plates

1 large tea pot (serves 15 tea cups)

20 table cloths (can be brought on request 1m x 1m pink gingham or 2m x 1m red)

1 cake trolley

The cost for the above is £30 hire fee.

Set up before the dance begins

- * Fill urns – turn on an hour before the dance begins

Tables

- * Cup and saucer with teaspoon per head
- * Sugar bowl / sugar lumps
- * Jug of milk (*fill just before opening to guests*)
- * 'Tea Time' sign explaining if they are paying for tea/cake or not and when it will be served.



Option 1 Set up before the dance begins

Cake served from main counter, tea served to table.

Main cake counter

- * Cover cake table with tablecloth
- * Teapots on trolley, with bags in each, ready to be filled with boiling water.
- * Box for used cups and saucers ready.
- * Cakes cut in to slices and arranged on the stands, as many as possible out and ready to be served so that it is easy.
- * Cake prongs out.
- * Plates and napkins stacked so they are easy to serve on to.



Option 2 Set up before the dance begins

Pre-ordering with tea and cake served to tables

As above in option 1 with additions of ~

Tables

- * Clear table number on each table
- * Side plate and napkin per person

Main cake counter

Use to display cakes to choose from for pre-ordering.



At the dance ~ option 2 ordering process

- * Take orders for tea and cake as people arrive.
- * Explain what it costs and that orders will be delivered to their table at 'Tea Time', take payment in advance. *(if they aren't sure if they'll want tea or cake explain they can buy it later from the cake table.)*
- * Write on a pad the table number and how many cake portions have been paid for.

- * Rip this out and leave a copy on their table (as a receipt.) Repeat the order onto a second page and keep in your pad so you have the order for each table on a separate piece of paper in your pad.
- * Take a large cake plate and put each table's cake order on the plate with a flag indicating the table it is for.
- * Deliver this plate to the appropriate table at teatime.

Running order

Please explain how 'Tea Time' will run to any volunteers.

An hour before doors open ~ we will have a meeting with Ragroof workers and any volunteers to check in on the running order of the event.

Opening

Ragroof welcome people show them to their seats and if needed explain how teatime will run.

Just before tea is announced

- *Make sure urns are boiling.
- *Cups and saucers have milk in.
- *Cakes cut and ready to serve.
- *Fill the teapots and put them on the tea trolley.

'Tea Time'

'Everything stops for tea!'

Teatime helpers, 'nippys' and dance teacher liase with DJ to announce 'Tea Time.'

The DJ announces what will happen at 'Tea Time' to the audience.

'The Ragroof 'Nippys' signal the start of 'Tea Time' with a cake entrance and then filled tea pots are delivered to the tables and either people queue up for their cake at a cake table or their pre-ordered plate of cake is delivered to them at their seat.

Clear Up

Please advise volunteers to start clearing cups and saucers after teatime has finished (signalled by a nippy Charleston)

After the event ~ Ragroof tablecloths need to be wiped and cake plates washed and packed away.

Hired stuff to go back in boxes (or as arranged with caterers)