



Keep some biscuits such as shortbread, crackers, toast or "Bela" on the table to accompany the tea. Don't forget the salty biscuits for the diabetics!

### OUTER BEAUTY

Nowadays, presentation is the key for any event, and a tea party is no different. The level of creativity hosts these days possess is really admirable.

Coordinate your crockery according to theme and colour so that there is cohesion. For example, do either porcelain crockery if you want a vintage theme or clay crockery if you are hoping for a more ethnic vibe, but never both. And although it might be tempting, avoid disposable crockery and cutlery as much as you can.

Since it is an outdoor party, try to keep the outdoorsy spirit alive. Don't go too overboard with your drapes and tents since it will rob away the attention from your garden. Winter is a time when a lot of flowers are in bloom, so plant some seasonal flowers beforehand or purchase flower pots.

Winter is also a time when dust is in the air, so get your gardener to clean up the garden to freshen it up.



### SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

A garden party entails that guests will move around and mingle, but many will prefer to sit in one place and calmly sip their cup of tea. Keep a lot of chairs around for this purpose, and add a few sofas if you can for people to lounge in and engage in a long conversation.

For a more casual setting, lay some old-school chequered picnic blankets on the

grass. This would be a hit with the kids.

Not everyone is a fan of the great outdoors, and some might prefer sitting indoors. Keep this in mind and decide where you would keep these guests to set it up from beforehand.

You will also need to give people access to the washroom in your house, so make sure other doors in your house are locked for both privacy and security.

### HELPING HANDS

Since an outdoor party involves bringing out all the essentials from inside your home, you need all the help you can get. Borrow a few helping hands from your family or friends. Set up some bins so that people don't litter in your garden. Organise the layout in a buffet-style and request people to help themselves – this will be much less stressful for you.

The best times for a garden party are to start in the morning and finish at noon or start in the afternoon until sunset. This also means that your guests will be visiting for a limited time, so if you want to enjoy your time you can't be the one to fuss over all the little details. Delegate the task to someone else such as a younger family member who won't mind taking charge for a few hours. Grab a cup of tea and do your social rounds; make the garden party a fun experience not only for your guests, but you as well. As the saying (slightly modified) goes, you can "have your tea and drink it, too!"

### By Mehereen Aziz

Photo by **Shahrear Kabir Hemeel**, at a recent Vintage Tea Party hosted by Rupo Shams.

Set design and decoration: **Rupo Shams**

