



Of teas and marmalade skies

I am not a winter person; absolutely not, and I have loads of reasons to defend my stance. However, there are things about the chilly dusk that I love, and those are tea parties and barbecues.

I truly become that girl from 'Lucy in the sky with diamonds' and sitting under the marmalade sky in a garden on the soft green grass, with tangerine bougainvillea cascading down, and instead of cellophane flowers of yellow and green, the lovely winter blooms swaying their heads in the winter breeze is simply love in my dictionary of romanticism.

My mad hatter's party would be about warm lemon mascarpone cheese scones with a steaming cup of cardamom tea, or a plate of hot daalpuri and pumpkin flower fritters with malai chai.

Winter is usually the time when your loved ones living abroad are here, your children are home because of school break, and your entire society is dolled up and attending weddings, barbecues, and tea parties.

I suggest a simple version of such events, toning down the grandeur and superficiality, and hosting a small cosy tea or barbecue at home. From getting the

coals from local bazaar to lighting the place with kerosene lamps, arranging cane chairs and shujni carpets with lots of colourful cushions is what I am talking about.

The main purpose of this get-together is a heart to heart fun conversation with your loved ones and thus, your warmth and love should be the main element to set the ambient tone for the party.

Simplicity has a charm of its own that is somehow now non-existent. We have to hire an event planner, we have to go over the top with exotic menus, we have to wear gowns and get all caked up from the salon. There is no end to the we-have-tos and unfortunately, every party ends up with the same flavour — be it evening tea, a birthday party, or mehndi. It's almost sickening to see and go to the same old stiff events day in and day out.

I may be tawdry in not going with the flow, but I am always for old charm. I cannot help but love a tea pot with a hand embroidered tea cosy on it, matching napkins and a bouquet of flowers freshly cut from the garden.

Desi snacks like home-made nimkis dotted with Nigella seeds, semolina halwa and gurer payesh along with paper thin puris, or even your experimental lop-sided coffee cake or cheese cake, chunky chocolate chip cookies are all as lip-smacking as any cold turkey cuts or cucumber sandwiches.

So I suggest get your tea cups out and call friends over, put your feet up on a chair and have fun to your heart's fill by sipping your tea and enjoying the dusky wintry sky.

— RBR

Photo: Sazzad Ibne Syed/LS Archive