



Travel & Leisure

Best Afternoon Tea Places in Penang

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Is tea your cup of tea? If the answer is "yes", you will probably enjoy sitting down for afternoon tea. As its name suggests, afternoon tea is usually served between 3.00 pm to 6.00 pm. Restaurants serving pastries, coffee and tea might offer afternoon tea sets with choices of sweet and savory pastries. Afternoon tea is basically a meal after a meal to satisfy "that sinking feeling" and it is quite different to another in between meals called, "high tea". According to "Top 12 Best

High Tea in Penang 2022" (2022), the mouth watering pastries such as scones, sandwiches, and cakes that are served for day tea in the middle of the day is called "afternoon tea". High tea, in contrast, is served in the early evening and has much heartier fare such as meat, poultry, fish, and egg delicacies apart from bread and sweets treats.

If you have read the book, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, an 1865 English novel by Lewis Carrol, you have probably read a chapter on afternoon tea under the title, "A Mad Tea-Party". However, unlike the tea party in the novel, the standard afternoon tea is usually served without wine but a variety of teas as a replacement. Some of the basic types of tea usually prepared for afternoon tea are English Breakfast which is a great black tea, sipped with milk or lemon; Irish Breakfast



which is a strong black tea, also drunk with milk and sugar; Earl Grey which is a strong tea flavored with bergamot orange and Darjeeling tea which is an Indian origin of tea, with a light and unique taste, usually drunk without milk and lemon (Rose, 2022).

According to Johnson (2015), the origins of afternoon tea can be traced back to Anna Russell, the 7th Duchess of Bedford, a personal friend of Queen Victoria and a well-known member of London society, who complained of feeling hungry in the late afternoon in the year 1840. She desired a tiny meal to appease her hunger - nothing substantial, just enough to sustain her till dinner in the evening. The upper class of English society ate a massive breakfast, a little lunch, and a late dinner in the 1880s. The Duchess requested that a tray of tea, cake, bread and butter be brought to her room in the late afternoon. She started inviting friends to join her after this became her habit.

Based on the writer's experience, a few places are worth sharing here for a satisfying afternoon tea experience. Eastern and Oriental (E&O) Hotel is listed by Penanglious and FoodAdvisor websites as one of the best places for afternoon/high tea. The afternoon tea at E&O Hotel is served at Palm Court between 3:00 p.m-5:00 p.m daily and reservation in advance is preferable.



Priced at RM99 nett per person, customers will have a selection of sweet and savory pastries, sandwiches and cakes. Scones with cream, jam and butter are quite a signature of any afternoon tea and E&O Hotel has these in their afternoon tea set. Usually, afternoon tea delicacies are served in a tiered tea stand with either two or three tiers, but this is not compulsory for serving. This tray-like serving tiered-stand is claimed to be the symbolic piece for afternoon tea (Wilson, 2020). When attending an afternoon tea, it is advisable that you check the dress code prescribed by the restaurant/café as some places are quite strict about this and entry will not be permitted if the dress code is not adhered to. As for E&O Hotel, smart casual attire is required (Polo T-shirts are acceptable but guests are discouraged from wearing shorts, singlets, flip flops and sandals). E&O Hotel is known for its great hospitality and quality culinary and thus, having an afternoon tea here is unlikely to be disappointing.

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Another place claimed as one of the best places to enjoy afternoon tea is Suffolk House. This mansion, which was built in 1805, is a fascinating Anglo-Indian garden house and the only surviving Georgian mansion in Malaysia. The afternoon tea starts from 2.30 p.m- 5.30 p.m every day and is priced at RM110++ for two pax. Among the sweet delights served at the Suffolk House are English scones, varieties of cakes and cookies, while the savory delicacies include cucumber and smoked salmon sandwiches, chicken and mushroom pie as well as beetroot tart. The choices of teas among others are Earl Grey, English Breakfast, fruity chamomile, green tea and Darjeeling. At Suffolk House, you can choose to have your afternoon tea served in the air-conditioned banquet hall with captivating, elegant interior design of Georgian architecture or the outdoor dining area overlooking the garden. An afternoon tea at Suffolk House is a must-try as the ambience and

scrumptious taste of the food will leave you in amazement.

A more Western and Oriental fusion afternoon tea set is offered by Botanica Mansion which has existed since 1881. After a massive restoration completed by Botanica CT, this place was opened to the public for the pleasure of its cuisine, accommodation and surrounding lush greenery. Decorated with terracotta and patterned floor as well as minimal ornamental displays, this mansion offers a very tempting afternoon tea to suit local taste called, the "Ultimate Sunset Seafood Afternoon Tea Set" priced at RM288.00+ for 2-4 pax for those with bigger appetite as this set comes with a variety of food options. Served from 2.00 p.m to the very early evening at 6.30 p.m is specifically offered for sunset watching. Among the delicacies included in this afternoon tea are crab cake with Bearnaise sauce, pan seared scallop with



Botanica Mansion



Suffolk House

saffron cream sauce, smoke salmon roulade on pancake and chuka wakame, kueh pie tee with fresh crabmeat, otak fries with green chili sauce, glutinous rice wrapped in spicy shrimp, dark chocolate pistachio truffles, lemon buttercream cakes, kuih seri muka as well as gula Melaka and pandan jelly. Being a little different from the standard, traditional afternoon tea, the one offered at Botanica mansion will surely be an unforgettable experience especially when being satisfied with its mains of three-way Australian whole lobster and fresh oyster with salsa and caviar or baked oyster mornay.

The choice is yours - to indulge yourself in some delicious treats and be spoiled with the ambience, pleasant-looking dining hall and hospitality of afternoon tea serving, or to brew your own tea from a tea bag and sip it in front of your tv at home. As mentioned in the novel by Henry James entitled, "Portrait of a Lady", "Under certain

circumstances there are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea. There are circumstances in which, whether you partake of the tea or not- some people of course never do-the situation is in itself delightful."

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