

WARM UP

1 Decide if these sentences are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 Afternoon tea is a very modern tradition.
- 2 It was started by the upper classes.
- 3 The first ever afternoon tea took place in London.
- 4 The usual time for afternoon tea is four o'clock.
- 5 People do not often take afternoon tea anymore.

Afternoon tea menus

The British custom of taking afternoon tea dates back to the early 19th century when the 7th Duchess of Bedford, Anna Russell, supposedly complained about a 'sinking feeling' during the late afternoon. At the time people only ate two meals a day, breakfast and dinner at around 8 o'clock in the evening. The solution was a pot of tea and a light snack brought to the Duchess in her private chambers during the afternoon.

Later she invited friends to join her in her summer country residence and this summer practice proved so popular that the Duchess continued it when she returned to London, sending cards to her friends asking them to join her for 'tea and a walk in the fields'.

Other social hostesses quickly picked up on the idea and before long all of fashionable society sipped tea and nibbled sandwiches mid-afternoon. Traditionally, the upper classes served a 'low' or 'afternoon' tea at around four o'clock, just before the fashionable promenade in Hyde Park in London.

The middle and lower classes ate a more substantial 'high' tea later in the day, at

five or six o'clock, instead of a late dinner. The names derive from the height of the tables on which the meals are served, high tea being served at the dinner table, low tea at a coffee table.

Sadly today most British people do not take afternoon tea, except for as a treat or on special occasions, but you can still indulge in a little bit of British tradition in many hotels and tearooms up and down the country.



GLOSSARY

- sinking *angosciante*
- proved *si dimostrò*
- before long *in breve tempo*
- sipped *sorseggiarono*
- nibbled *spizzicarono*
- promenade *passeggiata*



ACTIVITIES

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the text about the history of afternoon tea and answer these questions.

- 1 When does the tradition of afternoon tea date back to?
- 2 Who was Anna Russell and how did she supposedly start the tradition?
- 3 What was the solution to Anna Russell's problem?
- 4 Why did she continue offering afternoon tea in London?
- 5 What originally determined the time London's upper classes took tea?
- 6 What is the difference between 'high' and 'low' tea?

LISTENING

3  10 **PET** Listen to somebody explaining a typical afternoon tea menu and complete the missing information.

Traditional afternoon tea menu

A selection of freshly prepared finger sandwiches: (1) _____; egg mayonnaise with cress; smoked (2) _____ with cream cheese; Coronation chicken or ham and (3) _____.

Warm scones with clotted (4) _____ and preserves and a variety of (5) _____ cakes and pastries.

Speciality teas

Assam: a strong full-bodied tea from (6) _____;

Darjeeling: an (7) _____ and astringent tea from India;

Earl Grey: a blend of (8) _____ teas scented with oil of bergamot;

Lapsang Souchong: a (9) _____ tea with a (10) _____ aroma and flavour

Cream tea

Scones, clotted cream and preserve served with a pot of (11) _____.

Champagne afternoon tea

A glass of (12) _____ with the traditional afternoon tea



WRITING

4 Write an afternoon tea menu which is suitable for Italian tastes. When you finish, display it for the rest of the class to see and decide which your favourite menu is.