

Time for tea? One lump or two?

Herts Advertiser
food writer
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samples some
afternoon tea at
venues in the St
Albans area.



Is there any other meal in the world as lovely as a traditional English afternoon tea?

The ritual of the fine china, tiered cake stand, endless sandwiches, plenty of scones and cakes, a piano playing in the background... how decadent and British can you get?

OK, you don't actually need to eat lots of cakes mid-afternoon, but what a fantastic way to end a day of shopping, or to celebrate a special occasion.

It's dark at four, so why not retreat inside and spoil yourself?

While I was researching afternoon tea in the area, I was amazed at what good value it is. You can spend time in the most glamorous hotels in the area, relax in their drawing rooms, with log fires, and a glass of champagne, eat delicious food, and at prices ranging from £8

to £22.50 per person.

In these cash-strapped times, can I suggest that rather than go out for lunch or dinner for a special occasion, you try afternoon tea?

Next time Mum comes to visit, or you feel like giving yourself a pre-Christmas treat, try a proper afternoon tea.

Sopwell House serves a delicious, very traditional afternoon tea in its cosy drawing room at the front of the house.

The fire was lit and a pianist could be heard from the centre of the hotel. We were shown to a table tucked into a pretty alcove, and were given a glass of champagne.

Relaxed but formal

The room was full of families, friends and couples having tea, and there was a relaxed, formal atmosphere. The food was beautifully presented, with a selection of sandwiches, fruit scones with Devonshire cream and jam, and delicious pastries and cakes.

I thought it was amazing value at £24 per person and if you don't want champagne it is just £16 per person. You do need to book and the room was full on the Sunday afternoon that we went.

In the summer you can have tea on the other side of the hotel on the terrace overlooking the garden, but you might have to share it with weddings and girls in dressing gowns from the spa!

I think it is a gorgeous place for a winter treat, and you can hide away near the fire and indulge



Sopwell House

in some fab cakes. We did not manage to eat everything, so they boxed the cakes we could not finish – I can recommend the fruit cake in particular!