

Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View

Dear Listener:

Thank you for stopping by for a visit at Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View podcast! To make it easy, you will find a transcript of each episode. I hope you enjoy the visit!

Episode 13- The Joy of Afternoon Tea

Welcome to Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. Thanks for stopping by! Grab a glass of Lemonade, pull up a rocker and join me for conversations about living the Simple Life. Go ahead. Get comfortable and settle in for a good visit. It's time to relax and enjoy!

Welcome back to the porch! You are just in time for some afternoon tea. Ah, that just sounds so elegant, doesn't it? Fancy. Elaborate, even. I bet you're sitting over there in your rocker envisioning a table covered in white linen, with sterling silver and China serving pieces.

On that table are trays and towers laden with delicate savories, scones, and pastries, sitting demurely on white doilies.

In your mental image, do you see ladies dressed in finery? Beautiful dresses, stylish hats, and maybe even white gloves? (I bet if you listen close enough you can even hear the quiet conversation and a soft laugh or two, right?)

Ah, this old porch doesn't look much like that, does it, even if there is an old glass pitcher of lemonade and a chipped plate filled with cookies sitting on the table over there. No, your vision may have been the setting for a Victorian Queen's Afternoon Tea, but did you know originally it was a much simpler affair?

In 1840, Anna, the duchess of Bedford, found herself getting hungry around four in the afternoon. In her day, breakfast was served around 8 in the morning, with the evening meal served twelve hours later. A midday meal wasn't usually served. It is no wonder she craved a bite to eat!

Her cure was to enjoy a snack of bread and butter, and a slice of cake served with a cup of tea. It was just enough to hold her over until dinner.

It seems as if we have shifted as a society to the point where calming rituals no longer have a place in our daily lives. We have allowed all the extraneous things to override taking time for ourselves.

Yet, the one thing I often try to stress to others is, we are important. We can give, and give, and give. But if we do not take time to refill ourselves, then at some point, we have nothing left to give.

The demands on our time begin the moment we open our eyes in the morning. From home, to family, to work to errands. Once our daily activities are done, we come full circle to family to home to falling in bed, exhausted and used up.

We need to take back a bit of time each day to refresh, relax and rejuvenate. Doing this, more than anything, will help our minds, body and energy regroup and be better able to face the challenges for the remainder of the day. Which is why I am a strong advocate of setting aside time in each day for Afternoon Tea.

We can emulate Anna, Duchess of Bedford, and escape to our private room at 4 pm each day. However, that isn't always possible if we work in an office or have children who have after school activities. But we can still find some time in each day.

My goal for Afternoon Tea is at least 30 minutes every afternoon around 2. Depending on the work at hand, the timing may have to be shifted a bit, but for the most part, I make an effort to honor that time.

During my break, I'm able to just breathe and set work aside for a bit. I do my best to allow my mind to relax, not think about the work at hand or what chores I am facing the remainder of the day. Some days, I work on a craft, or research one I think I would like to start doing. Other days I read another chapter or two in a book I'm enjoying.

And during some breaks, I either work in my journal or just sit there, not thinking about anything specific, and just enjoying my surroundings. Since my tea break is usually taken while sitting in my swing outside, that means watching the antics of the cows, listening to the birds, or observing a bunny rabbit in the bushes trying to stay hidden from the dogs. Once my tea break is over, I feel rested and ready to tackle the rest of my day.

Let me guess. Right now, you are thinking, 'Hah! I have too much to do today to take a break!' Or you are telling yourself a quiet break is too indulgent. Or, you are promising yourself a break after dinner is eaten, the dishes are washed, and you can finally sit down in the evening. But by that time, you are probably so exhausted, all you really want to do is go to bed.

In truth, taking an afternoon break is healthy for you. First, it helps you to focus. Better focus can also help you to pay closer attention to the job at hand and allow you to make fewer mistakes.

Second, it helps to reduce your stress levels. Taking a break gives you a chance to relax and find solutions to any obstacles that are creating that stress.

Taking a break also helps you to prevent burnout, gives you a fresh perspective, and can improve your creativity levels.

An afternoon tea break can also help you to refuel. Depending on the work you have planned in the afternoon will help you to decide what type of snack to have.

If you are inside and doing a few household chores or working on handmade Christmas gifts, it is perfectly fine to have a cup of coffee and a few cookies. But if you are outside working, especially in the heat, you want to avoid sugary snacks, such as soft drinks and a slice of cake, or even dairy products such as yogurt.

Instead, think of healthier choices, such as fruit. I found that having chilled orange slices is not only refreshing but gives me a boost of needed energy when working in the heat and humidity. I also focus on drinking plenty of water and maybe a sports drink.

You can also use your afternoon tea as a social occasion. If you have a friend or two who live nearby, invite them over for tea. Socialization is an important part of our mental and emotional health, so you can justify the occasion if you feel you need a legitimate reason for a visit.

If necessary, talk with your friends who also want a break. Since we all usually have busy days, set a few guidelines ahead of time. Have a weekly tea that consists of 30 minutes to an hour and stick to the time frame. You can choose to be the regular hostess or decide to rotate.

And it doesn't have to be fancy. A cup of coffee or a glass of lemonade is sufficient. If you want, you can serve a plate of fresh-baked cookies or a bowl of fruit.

Another option for afternoon tea is to host a once-a-year spring gala. I honestly haven't done this yet, but it sounds fun. You can take it from one extreme to another by hosting a simple get together with friends, all the way to having the full-blown regalia complete with white tablecloths, silver serving dishes and a menu that any Queen would approve of.

You can also host tea parties for your young daughter and her friends. My daughter had one when she was younger, and the invitations not only included her friends, but also their favorite doll or stuffed animal. And yes, we had place settings for every attendee – human or otherwise. Recently, I had a reader leave a comment that said her future daughter-in-law wanted to have a tea party themed wedding. Now THAT had to be a great way to have an Afternoon Tea!

Having an Afternoon Tea is a ritual I strongly believe we each need to recreate in our daily lives. We need to reduce the stress that our daily activities can place on our shoulders. Our bodies require the down time to help it function at its best. And we need time to regroup, relax, and allow our creative natures to rejuvenate.

Whether Afternoon Tea is a solitary moment in our day or served up with laughter and conversation with a friend or two, it is truly an important activity we need to schedule every day. Now, help yourself to some more lemonade, and a few more of those cookies. And settle back in your rocker and just relax. We don't have to be royalty to enjoy the ritual!

If you want to learn more about the topic at hand or get a transcript for this episode, just visit my website at www.thefarmwife.com/podcast. That is the Resource page for this podcast and I have it set up by episodes to make things easier to find. To help you out, this is Episode 13.

And while you're there, take a look around at other posts to help you learn even more about living a Simple Life.

If you have questions or need some help figuring out your answers, you can stop by for an email visit at thevirtualporch@gmail.com. And be sure to subscribe – you don't want to miss a single conversation. I'll be sitting on the porch every Monday morning waiting for your visit!

Thanks again for stopping in. I will see you next week on Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. And while you are waiting on the next episode, grab that glass of refreshment, pull up a rocker, and sit back for a while. It's time to

Relax and Enjoy!

julie