

Sorority Tea in the Afternoon

Written by Debbi Covington

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Fellowship, leadership, and a lifelong commitment to community service are the daily themes in the lives of sorority women—from our college members to alumnae. On Monday, March 7, these women who number in the millions will celebrate International Badge Day. On that day, all of us will honor our separate and distinct Greek affiliations by wearing our badges or letters. It's a moment in time set aside to acknowledge successful women around the globe—whether they are U.S. senators or incoming university freshmen.

The celebration to honor sisterhood was started in 1997 by the National Panhellenic Conference. The inaugural campaign was titled: "It's as Simple as Wearing your Pin ... With Pride." On March 7, campuses and chapters across the globe join to celebrate achievements in science, community, government, media, literature, art, sports, medicine—and those female leaders who have had a huge impact on the development of self-respect and new opportunities for girls and young women everywhere. Sorority women everywhere are invited to wear their pins and celebrate International Badge day with all Greek women. International Badge Day is a great day to host a tea party for your sorority sisters! This week's recipes are great for an alumnae tea or a collegiate social. For more information about International Badge Day, visit the National Panhellenic Conference website, Facebook or Twitter to check for updates on International Badge Day activities.

Cranberry Tea

8 cups water

2 cinnamon sticks

5 whole cloves

2 cups pineapple juice

2 cups cranberry juice cocktail

4 tea bags

1-3/4 cups water

1/2 cup brown sugar

Bring water to a boil. Add cinnamon and cloves. Simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from heat,

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add tea bags; steep for 15 to 10 minutes. Remove tea bags, cinnamon, and cloves. Add juices and sugar. Heat until warmed through. Do not boil. Serve hot. Serves 10 to 12.

Peach and Raspberry Soup

½ cup white wine

1 cup orange juice

2 tablespoons sugar

3-1/2 cups peeled and chopped peaches

2 cups plain yogurt

2 cups fresh raspberries

Combine the white wine, orange juice and sugar in a saucepan; mix well. Cook over medium heat until the sugar dissolves, stirring constantly. Stir in the peaches. Cook for 5 minutes or until the peaches have released their juices, stirring frequently. Let stand and cool. Puree the peach mixture in a food processor. Add the yogurt. Process just until blended. Chill, covered, for 1 hour or longer. Puree the raspberries in a food processor; strain into a bowl. Ladle the peach soup into soup bowls. Top with raspberry puree. Serves 6.

Vegetable Salad Tea Sandwiches

2 cucumbers

2 carrots

1 small onion

2 stalks celery

1 cup mayonnaise

½ cup salad dressing

½ teaspoon salt

1 (1/4-ounce) envelope unflavored gelatin

¼ cup water

Peel and remove seeds from cucumbers. Grate cucumbers over a paper towel and squeeze to remove the juice. Grate carrots and onion. Chop celery very fine. Combine cucumbers, carrots, onion, and celery with mayonnaise, salad dressing, and salt. Mix well. Combine unflavored gelatin with water over double boiler until gelatin is dissolved. Pour gelatin mixture into vegetable mixture. Mix well. Refrigerate for at least 12 hours until mixture is set. Spread between slices of bread or serve with crackers. Serves 8 to 10.

Pickled Pimento Cheese Tea Sandwiches

4 cups (16 ounces) shredded extra-sharp Cheddar cheese

3 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and diced finely

4 tablespoons grated onion

1 (4-ounce) jar diced pimentos, drained

1/3 cup sweet pickle relish

1 cup mayonnaise, or enough to blend mixture smoothly

24 slices white or whole wheat bread

Mix first six ingredients together in a large bowl. Adjust amount of mayonnaise to make mixture spread easily. Trim edges of bread. Spread cheese filling on 12 slices of bread, then put the other 12 bread slices on top. Slice sandwiches into strips. Serves 12.

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Walnut Tea Sandwiches

1-1/2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, room temperature

1/2 cup finely chopped walnuts, toasted

2 tablespoons finely minced fresh parsley

1 tablespoon finely minced green pepper

1 tablespoon finely minced onion

1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

1/4 teaspoon grated fresh nutmeg

Salt

White pepper

24 slices sandwich bread

In a large bowl, combine cream cheese, walnuts, parsley, and pepper. Add onion, lemon juice, nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Stir until well blended. Spread 12 slices of bread with cream cheese mixture and top with remaining 12 bread slices. Cut the crusts from the sandwiches with a sharp knife. Cut the sandwiches in half diagonally and then in half again. Serves 12.

Salmon Swirls

1 (14.75-ounce) can red salmon, drained

1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened

1 tablespoon small capers

1/4 cup diced red onion

6 (8-inch) flour tortillas

Combine salmon and cream cheese with a electric mixer, beating until smooth. Fold in capers and red onion, distributing evenly. Divide mixture between tortillas. Spread to within 1/8-inch of edge. Roll tortilla tightly. Wrap in plastic, refrigerate one hour before serving. To serve, unwrap; slice each roll crosswise into 1-inch slices. Serves 12.

Bleu Cheese Savories

1 cup Bleu cheese, softened

1/2 cup butter, softened

1 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 cup walnuts, coarsely chopped

1/2 cup walnuts, finely chopped

Cream cheese and butter. Add flour and coarsely chopped nuts. Take teaspoons of mixture and form into balls. Roll in finely chopped nuts and bake at 350 degrees for 15 to 17 minutes. Serves 8 to 10.

Almond-Chocolate Shortbread

1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened

3/4 cup butter, softened

3/4 cup sugar

2 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 (6-ounce) package semisweet chocolate morsels

1/2 cup sliced almonds, toasted

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Combine cream cheese and butter in a mixing bowl; beat well at low speed of an electric mixer. Gradually add sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Combine flour and baking powder; add to creamed mixture, beating well. Stir in vanilla. Spread mixture evenly in an ungreased 13x9x2-inch baking pan. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes. Sprinkle chocolate morsels immediately over baked layer; let stand 5 minutes or until chocolate melts. Spread chocolate evenly, to edge of pan. Sprinkle with almonds. Cool and cut into 3x1-inch bars. Serves 12 to 15.

Lemon Cheesecake Bites

1 (18.25-ounce) box lemon cake mix

1 cup chopped pecans

1 egg

1 stick butter

1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese

2 eggs

1 (16-ounce) box powdered sugar

½ teaspoon lemon extract

Combine cake mix, pecans, butter, and 1 egg in a medium mixing bowl. Press mixture lightly in a greased 13x9x2-inch baking dish. In a medium mixing bowl, cream together cream cheese, 2 eggs, powdered sugar, and lemon extract. Pour over cake mix mixture. Bake in preheated 350 degree oven for 40 to 45 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove from oven and cool. Refrigerate until set. Cut into small squares. Serves 12 to 15.

The writer owns Catering by Debbi Covington and is the author of the cookbook, Dining Under the Carolina Moon. Debbi's website address is www.cateringbydebbicovington.com . She may be reached at 525-0350 or by email at debbic@cateringbydebbicovington.com.

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