

Smoked Salmon Pinwheels

1 loaf wheat bread, sliced
 1 small lemon
 6 T softened butter
 1 T chopped fresh dill
 5 oz smoked salmon slices
 Freshly ground black pepper
 Sprig of fresh dill, to garnish

Cut the crusts off the wheat bread slices. Roll the slices with a rolling pin until they are thin.

Grate the lemon zest finely and beat into the butter, along with the chopped dill. Spread each slice of bread with the lemon dill butter and arrange smoked salmon slices over the bread, leaving a strip of buttered bread at one short end. Grind some black pepper over the top.

With the salmon-covered short end towards you, roll up the bread carefully and tightly like a Swiss roll. The buttered end will ensure that the bread sticks together.

Wrap each roll in clear film and chill for 1 hour. This will help the filling and bread to set in the rolled position so that it does not unwind when sliced.

Using a sharp bread knife, carefully cut each roll into 1/2-inch slices. Arrange the slices attractively on a plate and serve garnished with a sprig of dill. Makes 50 sandwiches.



Gerardine Gwarnicki serves sandwiches to Karen Kipnis, right, of Tucson, at a tea she hosted in her Riverwoods home. Looking on is Chicago resident Mimi Mills, the tea's birthday honoree. — Buzz Orr/Staff Photographer

High time for tea

By **STEPHANIE FOSNIGHT** | Staff Writer
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Mimi Mills pulls a stuffed dog and a bracelet out of a gift bag as her daughters, son and grandsons exclaim over the presents.

It could be any birthday gathering, until a tall woman who appears to have stepped out of 1800 leans over the table.

"More tea?" inquires the apparition, who is dressed in a rich green gown complete with lace collar, brooch and bustle. She is holding an antique silver teapot in her lace-mitted hands and her words ring with an Irish lilt.

Welcome to High Tea with Gerri, Gerardine Gwarnicki's six-year-old brainchild that's as popular as raisin scones fresh from the oven.

"We've spent a lot of family gatherings eating, but never one quite like this," remarked Highland Park resident Marla Schachtel as she sat around a table decked with flowers, china and a silver basket holding scones. The family had gathered to celebrate Chicago resident Mills' birthday in style and included three women and three men.

"A lot of people think it's not OK for the men to come, but gentlemen can have tea, also," Gwarnicki said, using antique silver tongs as she served the sandwiches.

When she started her business in 2000, Gwarnicki decided most American palates wouldn't be satisfied by a simple round of sandwiches, so she developed a

four-course meal that combines the custom of dainty afternoon tea with the heavier high tea that once served as an evening meal in Great Britain.

"I serve a large menu with the elegance of afternoon tea," said Gwarnicki, an Ireland native who worked in London before emigrating to the States with her Polish husband in the 1980s.

This afternoon, she started with closed and open-faced sandwiches, including the traditional watercress and cucumber sandwich that dates back to the 1850s start of the afternoon tea custom. Gwarnicki then served homemade raisin scones with lemon curd and Devonshire cream.

"This lemon curd is exquisite," Mills said, enjoying her scone.

Next came homemade apple-rhubarb pie and, finally, a tray of inviting petit fours.

Throughout it all, of course, was the tea, a blend of black and Earl Grey that Gwarnicki poured liberally.

"My tea is the rave of every party," she said. "People who think they can't drink tea drink 10 cups of this."

Gwarnicki brings tea, all of the food, the china and the serving dishes with her when she presents her tea parties, which are \$25 per person with a 10-person minimum. She usually goes to the client's house, although Gwarnicki hosted this tea party in her Riverwoods home.

If you'd like to plan your own tea party, here are Gwarnicki's recipes for three classic finger sandwiches. Be sure to serve them without crusts and keep them covered with cellophane until just before the party begins.

"We sit, we unveil and we serve," Gwarnicki said.



Flower-draped tier of finger sandwiches awaits tea time. After the sandwiches come scones, then pie of then petit fours. — Buzz Orr/Staff Photographer



Gwarnicki pours tea into an antique cup. She serves "Gerri's Blend," a mixture of black and Earl Grey teas. — Buzz Orr/Staff Photographer