



The Secluded Tea Party



A VERY BRITISH TEA PARTY..... WITH A FEW TWISTS AND TURNS...!

HOSTED BY THE VERY MYSTERIOUS **MISS SUE FLAY (READ IT ALOUD ;)**

SHE OFFERS THEMED MONTHLY AFTERNOON TEA EVENTS BY INVITATION ONLY -
JUST GO TO WWW.SECLUDEDTEAPARTY.COM TO FIND OUT MORE.

OR WHY NOT TALK TO HER ABOUT.....

ENTERTAINING YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY AT HOME WITH A PRIVATE TEA PARTY HOSTESS TO SERVE YOUR EVERY NEED AND CAKE-BASED DESIRE

CIVILISED HEN PARTIES

CHILDREN'S AFTER SCHOOL PARTIES

"LADIES WOT DO LUNCH" TEA PARTIES

BABY SHOWERS

AFTER WORK EXCUSES FOR WORKING LADIES AND GENTS

AFTERNOON TEA PICNIC HAMPERS

WEDDINGS & FAVOURS

BIRTHDAY PARTIES

PRIVATE CAKE & SCONE ORDERS

AL FRESCO AFTERNOON TEA IN A RETRO BELL TENT - GO "GLAMPING" FOR A DAY (SHE CAN BRING IT TO YOUR GARDEN, OFFICE OR CHOICE OF LOCATION)

SHE CAN EVEN PROVIDE CREAM TEAS DIRECT TO YOUR DESK FOR ELEVENSES!

**ANY IDEA THAT YOU HAVE - BIG OR SMALL - CONTACT MISS SUE FLAY TO CHAT...
THE MORE CREATIVE OR UNIQUE THE BETTER... THERE ARE NO TEMPLATE
MENUS OR IDEAS HERE... IT'S ALL NEW AND BESPOKE EVERY TIME!**

Contact Miss Sue Flay at: thesecludedteaparty@live.co.uk

Or Visit: www.secludedteaparty.com



The Tea Party Hostess

Sue Flay

How did you successfully make the leap from coping with an impending redundancy, to starting up your dream business, The Secluded Tea Party?

I had been running my own *Secluded Tea Party* events once a month of a weekend alongside my normal working week to start with, so word of mouth had already started to get around, which certainly helped me when it came to leaving the day job for the unknown. To be honest, the redundancy had been a long time in coming, so by the time it happened I was ready to move onto my own projects and take control of my own dreams for a change! Since being made redundant I have been moving forward very quickly because everybody I come into contact with believes in me and my ideas and they have all been 100% supportive and kind in spreading the tea party word! There is most certainly no doubt in my mind that this was the right decision for me. I am having so much fun, although scary to now be my own boss, I am loving every minute of it!

What tools did you need?

If I hadn't sought business advice, I may well have given up before I had even started, as I can easily run away with my ideas and enjoy the creative side... But I have to force myself to sit down and do the serious parts too. Other than this, all of my ideas come from networking and talking to other people, socialising is the key for me. The more people I meet with, the more ideas flow and happen.

Were there any wobbles?

Many! I still set up a Tea Party table and wonder



Sue Flay
The Tea Party Hostess

if I have done enough to make it work for each event or for each set of guests. I know, looking back, that every Tea Party I have planned has been enjoyed by my guests, but at the time I get very anxious that I haven't done enough, or that it doesn't look quite right and I can be very self critical. Not sure if that is a good thing or a bad thing, and definitely causes some wobbly emotions from time to time. Finding venues was for my pop up events was an issue I thought I would face, as for the first few months I found it tricky to explain to people exactly what I was trying to achieve and they just didn't quite *get it*. But now that I have a series of fantastic themed and vintage tea parties behind me, people can't get enough of my blog (I have followers from overseas who send my items to add to the table because they wish they were here! :) and they understand when they see what I have created. Finding venues isn't so much of a problem now... they come to me!

Notable shifts, successes, memories?

My first Tea Party... I remember the nerves. Not only was I baking for 12 guests I had never met before, but I was hosting this afternoon tea party. I am a shy individual in nature, so confidence has been something that has been knocked many

times in the past. Running and hosting my Afternoon tea Parties has brought out a whole new woman in me! Much more confident, smiley and chatty, and this has been one of the best successes so far. A year ago I wouldn't have held much of a conversation with my work colleagues, let alone an entire table full of strangers where I now offer advice on tea, Cake and all things Afternoon tea related. I love every minute of it!

My Zombie Tea Party in July was a roaring success. I received more comments, feedback and attention through this one gory and unique event than all of my other events put together. The whole idea of it was to get a new crowd of people interested in my events... I had a lot of girls coming to my tea parties saying that their guys love cake and tea and would love to come, but would feel awkward coming to a vintage/floral tea party.... So the idea came from these conversations and

it was so much fun. Strictly adults, with Bleeding Heart Cupcakes, Eyeballs, and lot's of Zombie Entertainment and talk from special guests such as Zombie Enthusiasts who came all the way from london to join in! It was bizarre seeing these dressed up zombie guests ambling towards me when I served the cake to them that evening. A very memorable event indeed.

I sometimes feel like a child *playing tea parties* But do you know what? If I can make a living from doing that, I am one happy girl!

If you have a unique idea and your friends and family support you. Go for it!

And if you are like me and have the creativity and ideas, but not so much of the business sense, seek advice before you go too far. It's worth it.

www.secludedteaparty.com



Supper clubs in Cambridgeshire

FOR THOSE PARTIAL TO A NICE CUP OF TEA...

The Secluded Tea Party, various secret locations



Miss Sue Flay (Sue Flay – get it? Say it out loud), from Cambourne, runs monthly supper clubs around the county in the form of Secluded Tea Party events. 'I've always had a passion for afternoon tea and I wanted to share that,' she says. 'The events are underground tea parties – which doesn't

mean I find a dark basement to drink tea in, it's just that the tea parties are hosted in secret locations and all guests have to book their place in advance.

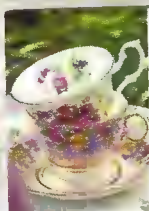
'Since I started running the tea parties we've had one in a bookshop, one at a cookery school and one at a local village hall. And the plan is to hold some al fresco events this summer.'

The club attracts tea-lovers from across the county. 'It's always great to see like-minded people enjoying each other's company over tea and cake,' says Sue.

The next Secluded Tea Party is 23 April. Visit thesecludedteapartyshhh.blogspot.com. There is a £12 donation towards ingredients. Sue also has plans to hold al fresco tea parties with a twist this summer:



MISS SUE FLAY
TEA PARTY HOSTESS
WWW.SECLUDEDTEAPARTY.COM
THESECLUDEDTEAPARTY@LIVE.CO.UK
TWITTER @ THESECLUDEDTEA
FACEBOOK: "THE SECLUDED TEA PARTY"



THE SECLUDED TEA PARTY
thesecludedteapartyshhh.blogspot.com
Email: thesecludedteaparty@live.co.uk
Twitter: [thesecludedtea](https://twitter.com/thesecludedtea)
Facebook: The Secluded Tea Party
"A Very British Tea Party...With a twist!"



From baking to blogging

Miss Flay has a finger in both pies! Not content with running innovative pop-up events as The Secluded Tea Party, Cambridge-based Miss (read it aloud) Sue Flay also writes a foodie blog and is organising Blogfest. If you want tips on how to write a successful blog, find out who the best local bloggers are or just want to know what exactly blogging is anyway, Sue and her three guest speakers will be on hand to help. 'A lot of people are scared of blogging,' says Sue, 'Perhaps they don't know how to get started or how to promote their blog but we can help, plus, of course, there will be tea and cake.'

19 Nov, 2pm – 4pm, secret Cambridgeshire location, secludedteaparty.com



The Secluded Tea Party

www.secludedteaparty.com



The
Secluded
Tea Party

AFTERNOON TEA WITH A FEW TWISTS AND TURNS...!

HOSTED BY THE VERY MYSTERIOUS **MISS SUE FLAY** (READ IT ALOUD ;)

THEMED MONTHLY AFTERNOON TEA EVENTS BY INVITATION ONLY
PRIVATE AFTERNOON TEA PARTIES & CATERING
FOR ANY OCCASION OR EVENT... JUST COME AND HAVE A CHAT

Contact Miss Sue Flay at: thesecludedteaparty.co.uk

visit: www.secludedteaparty.co.uk

Phone: 07852 227917

£50 advert in
Cambridge Observer
(ouch!)

The Secluded Tea Party

Modern & traditional Afternoon Tea Parties
(Hosted by Miss Sue Flay... Read it aloud!)

Monthly themed invitation-only Afternoon Tea
Events held across Cambridgeshire & surrounding
areas in unique & mysterious locations... Book a
place to meet new people over tea & cake!

Book your own Birthday Tea Party, sophisticated
Hen Party, any celebration or event in your own
home, garden, in your workplace or a venue of your
choice

Hire our retro 5m Bell Tent to take Afternoon Tea

Order a Picnic Hamper or Take Away Afternoon
Tea package

Afternoon Tea for your formal celebrations such as
weddings or Afternoon treats as favours

We are open to all ideas and suggestions, so for all
of your Afternoon Tea needs and desires, speak to
Miss Sue Flay at The Secluded Tea Party



Email: thesecludedteaparty@live.co.uk

Phone: 07852 227917

www.secludedteaparty.com



May 2011 Time for TEA

A pop-up tearoom, which appears in surprise locations around the county, The Secluded Tea Party is taking Cambridgeshire's foodie community by storm. Alice Ryan meets the party hostess, the mysterious Miss Sue Flay, to talk tea, cake and keeping secrets...

PICTURES BY DAVID JOHNSON

Open the door to Plurabelle Books – a bookshop-come-warehouse in the heart of Cambridge – and you expect to find miles of shelving, piles of rare tomes, and maybe the odd slightly dusty academic having a nose.

What you don't expect to see is a tea party in full swing, guests chatting away over plentiful pots of Lapsang Souchong and towers of freshly-baked scones.

But, for a single early-summer afternoon, Plurabelle has been magically transformed into a tearoom. And, thanks to some quirky touches (not least a rubber ducky sitting atop the Victoria sponge), there's an appropriately *Alice in Wonderland*-ish air to proceedings.

Mistress of ceremonies is Miss Sue Flay, busily topping up teacups and handing round slices of angel cake. Sue Flay is (if you haven't guessed, try saying it out loud) an alias; she also declines to appear on camera, to preserve her anonymity. Curiouser and curiouser, as Alice would say...

Miss Flay throws underground tea parties. As she is quick to point out, that doesn't mean they take place in dingy basements: it means they are thrown in secret locations; even guests, who book their places online, are only tipped off a day or two in advance.

Officially titled The Secluded Tea Party, Sue's enterprise has been in operation since the spring, in which time she's hosted teas in a village hall, a cookery school and a craft centre, as well as the bookshop; plans are also afoot to go al fresco, with a woodland event scheduled for next month.

"It's all about maintaining the element of surprise," explains Sue. "People know that, wherever the party takes place, they can enjoy a proper afternoon tea: sandwiches, scones, cakes and, of course, plenty of tea. But they don't know exactly what's going to be on the menu, or where the party will be, until just beforehand.

"It makes the whole thing a lot more exciting. And there's a great social element

to it as well: it's an opportunity to meet new people, make new friends or even do a bit of networking. One thing everyone comments on is the atmosphere: it's lovely."

Sue is tapping into the fast-growing trend for pop-up 'supper clubs'. The craze owes much to a certain Ms Marmite Lover: having dreamed of running a restaurant from her own kitchen, doing all the cooking on her trusty Aga, she subsequently began to organise moveable feasts in London; since then, clubs have been springing up across the country.

"I actually went to one in Croydon," explains Sue, 27. "I thought 'D'you know what? I could do this'. And I knew straight away that I wanted to do afternoon teas. I have to say I didn't know much about tea to begin with – I only drank builder's tea, and I'm not ashamed to admit it! – but I did know about cake..."

A keen baker, Sue, who lives in Cambourne, says few tasks are more satisfying than making a gravity-defying



Victoria sponge or a batch of pretty-as-a-picture cupcakes. "I do have a day job and I find baking is a brilliant stress reliever," she says. "I love experimenting with different recipes, though I don't like to make anything too modern for my teas: they are traditional. One of the biggest hits is actually macaroons, people love them."

Sue's passion for sweet treats had already inspired her to set up a cupcake club: a group of her friends would each bake a batch, then meet for coffee and do a cake exchange. "That was great fun, though not so good for the waistline," she laughs.

The Secluded Tea Party subsequently launched online via Sue's blog, thesecludedteapartyshhh.blogspot.com. The blog alone was an overnight success. Thanks to an engaging mixture of musings, tearoom reviews and recipes, Sue now has followers as far afield as the US; she recently entered into a global 'teacup exchange', in which she received a china cup all the way from America.

'There's nothing quite like a cuppa and a slice of cake, is there?'

That cup has now joined the ever-expanding collection of crockery stored in Sue's spare room. To help give her teas a genuinely traditional feel, she uses largely vintage teacups, plates, cake stands and cutlery, as well as lovely linen tablecloths.

"I am an aspiring vintage girl," explains Sue. "I hadn't really found my niche until I started doing this and began collecting pretty pieces of china; I absolutely love vintage now. The only problem I've got is that my spare room is totally chocka, so I'm actually looking for a permanent home for The Secluded Tea Party, where I can store everything and regularly open for tea."

"It won't necessarily be in Cambridge, it might be somewhere else in Cambridgeshire. I love the city but I'm a bit of a country girl – I grew up on a farm in

Arrington, which actually backed on to Wimpole Hall – so something like a barn conversion would be perfect."

Even after Sue does find fixed premises, she says The Secluded Tea Party will continue to roam the county, popping up in a different venue at least once a month. "A lot of people have found it through Twitter," explains Sue, who also has an expanding Facebook group. "They sign up online and then I send them a little questionnaire to fill in. A few days before the party, the questionnaires are circulated around all the guests, so they can find out a little bit about each other."

Each party attracts between 12 and 20 guests, a mixture of men, women and children. "The youngest guest we've had to date is Harriet, who's eight months old. She had a lovely time, eating little bits of cake and drinking caffeine-free tea from her plastic cup!"

Sue's visitors' book is full of warm words about the look and feel of her parties. And there are endless rave reviews of her

Gigggle cake

"This is a cake I'd never heard of before, but it actually stems from our part of the world: the Fens, to be precise," says Sue. "A boiled fruit cake sounds very unappealing but, believe me, it is delicious!"

"It is said to make the baker giggle when she or he hears their guests 'Oooh' and 'Aaah' over the end result, when they know just how easy it is to make. How true this is, I am not entirely sure... But I like the mystery behind the name."

"I had yet to make a local sweet dish, so I thought I'd give it a go. I have to say it is deliciously sweet and, despite not being a fruit cake fan myself, I really enjoyed it."

Serves 8

350g/12oz/2 cups mixed dried fruit

125g/4oz butter or margarine

175g/6oz/1 cup soft brown sugar

250g/8oz/2 cups self-raising flour

Pinch of salt

2 eggs beaten

225g/7.5oz can chopped pineapple – drained

125g/4oz glacé cherries – halved

Put the mixed dried fruit into a large bowl and cover with boiling water. Leave to soak for 10-15 minutes, then drain well.

Put the butter or margarine and sugar into a large saucepan and heat gently until melted.

Add the drained mixed dried fruit and cook over a low heat, stirring frequently for 4-5 minutes. Remove from the heat, transfer to a mixing bowl and leave to cool.



Sift the flour and salt into the mixture and stir well. The mixture is then mixed until thorough, followed by the pineapple and cherries, stirring to combine.

Transfer the mixture to a greased 1kg/2lb loaf tin and level the surface.

Bake in a preheated oven at 180°C/350° F/Gas Mark 4 for one hour.

Test the cake with a skewer. If it comes out clear the cake is cooked. If not return to the oven for a few more minutes.

Enjoy with a good, strong drink.

SHOP TALK

If you're a bookworm and you haven't heard of Plurabelle, there's a treat in store... As well as running a small bookshop, from their premises at The Michael Young Centre on Cambridge's Purbeck Road, the company has an impressive stock of 60,000 other titles, in 122 subject categories, which can be browsed online – visit www.plurabellebooks.com

Plurabelle
books



"I love experimenting with different recipes, though I don't like to make anything too modern for my area. They are traditional."

home-cooking; according to guests' comments, her chocolate truffles were especially memorable, along with some spicy scones with streusel topping.

Sue bakes everything herself, from scratch, using only top-quality ingredients – local and organic wherever possible – and no nasties. Her cakes are now so famous, she has been headhunted by The Cambridge Punting Co. (which offers people tea on the river, see www.letsGOPunting.co.uk) and is in increasing demand to make celebration sponges to order.

The only foodstuff which doesn't come direct from Sue's kitchen is the jam, which is made by another local lady. "She makes the jams specially to go with my different scones: when I did the streusel-topped fruit and spice scone, for example, she made a plum-nut preserve which worked amazingly alongside it."

Sue, who does all the promotion and networking involved, as well as baking and hosting, prides herself on the friendly atmosphere of her parties. "I like to get to know my guests a bit prior to the events, by email and social networking, because I think it makes the whole thing friendlier and more personal than simply taking tea in a tearoom; don't get me wrong, I love tearooms, but it's a very different experience."

Keen to keep the surprises coming, Sue has started to organise themed teas: there are Vintage, Murder Mystery and Zombie events already on the calendar (the latter with an 18 certificate). A dog lover – she has an adored cocker/collie, called Eddy, who enjoys hovering the kitchen floor after her baking extravaganzas – Sue is also planning a collaboration with the social group Big Walkies (www.bigwalkies.org.uk). "I'm even experimenting with doggy cupcakes; they're called 'pupcakes'," she laughs.

With her tea expertise expanding all the time – Rose Pouchong and a Rhubarb and Custard Rooibos are among her current favourites – Sue says her long-term ambition is to turn The Secluded Tea Party into a fulltime enterprise. As she says: "There's nothing quite like a cuppa and a slice of cake, is there?"



Miss Sue Flay is a true tea and cake aficionado. Having taken tea at establishments up and down the county, she says these three tearooms are the very finest in our area...

PEACOCKS TEAROOM, ELY

"Their tea menu is second to none, the food is always delicious and everything is served on pretty vintage plates – perfect."

www.peacockstearoom.co.uk

BY JOVEI, BURWELL (photograph courtesy)

"The cakes, in particular, are amazing. And I love the old-fashioned feel of being served by 'servants' in little aprons. Definitely worth a visit."

www.byjovetearooms.co.uk

GREENS COFFEE & CO., CAMBOURNE

"Greens is my local tearoom. It may be called Coffee & Co., but they also serve a mean cup of tea and fabulous cakes. I highly recommend it!"

www.greenscoffee.co.uk





MISS SUE FLAY PRESENTS
THE SECLUDED (ZOMBIE)
TEA PARTY

FRIDAY 8TH JULY 2011

7PM AT A SECRET LOCATION
GORY CAKE, SURPRISE ZOMBIE MOVIE
AND ALL THE TEA YOU CAN DRINK

FOR MORE INFO AND TO BOOK
GO TO

WWW.SECLUDEDTEAPARTY.COM



d'Arry's

Blogfest



SECLUDED TEA PARTY PRESENT SWAP

If all this holier-than-thou New Year abstinence leaves you craving a treat-filled blowout then look no further. The eternally fabulous Miss Sue Flay (who is featured in our 'Meet the Bloggers' piece on page 23), is hosting a rather tongue-in-cheek little post-Christmas soiree this month, where you'll get the chance to swap your naughtiest unwanted presents (novelty festive socks: we're looking at you) whilst enjoying afternoon tea and plenty of wickedly calorific nibbles. As with all Secluded Tea Parties there will be vintage gorgeousness galore: pretty crockery, bunting, dainty finger sandwiches, freshly baked scones, and an array of to-die-for

cakes. "It's a great way to meet new people over afternoon tea and escape the everyday for just a couple of hours," says Miss Flay. "It's the perfect treat for a dull January afternoon." Spaces at this event are very limited, but don't worry, you can now book your own Secluded Tea Party to enjoy with family, friends or colleagues. Miss Sue Flay will take care of all hosting duties and general domestic Goddessery from laying the perfect tea party table to serving up the delicious cakes and pouring the tea. She'll even clear up afterwards.

For more info, visit www.secludedteaparty.com

SECLUDED TEA PARTY

Name: Miss Sue Flay

Age: 27

Blog: *The Secluded Tea Party*

www.secludedteaparty.com

Hits: Over 26,000 since starting last year

Day Job: Administrator and tea party hostess

What's your blog about? It's about my afternoon tea parties and all my cake-based adventures. I'm passionate about blogging and thrilled to have met a huge network of bloggers from in and around Cambridge, as well as further afield. I hosted a blogging event not so long ago with guest speakers and the chance for bloggers and wannabe bloggers to get together and network, eat cake and understand how to get the most out of their blog, which I learnt a lot from. I now have a social circle just through blogging and reading other blogs, including a group of Cambridge-based food bloggers who get together monthly to try new places to eat together and chat. It's a superb way to get out and meet new people, I love it.

What inspired you to start blogging in the first place? I used it as a way to tell people about my love for afternoon tea and what I was getting up to with my secret afternoon tea parties around Cambridge. It is a great visual tool to show people the cakes I am making, the tables I am laying, and the events I am creating. I also use it to waffle about recipes and great tea rooms I find on my travels.

What has been your proudest moment for your blog? Having it featured in several articles and being the host of a large blogging event made me realise just how many people read my blog, and that makes me very proud. It's also great to see that people are reading my blog in all sorts of different places – I have lots of American followers and some have even sent over tea cups, plates and napkins to be placed on my tea party table because they love what I do and can't be there. People are so kind, and I am thrilled to attract such lovely followers.

What are your top tips for bloggers starting out? Be yourself. Blog about your passions, and don't worry about figures and followers and all the technical elements to start with. It's very easy to be told you need to be looking at how many followers you have and where they are coming from, but it shouldn't be your main concern at first. Don't take yourself too seriously and go with the flow. You will learn as you go, and there is a large and very friendly network out there to help you. It takes time and energy but make sure you don't neglect your blog. It will get read.



ink Eat + Drink Eat + Drink Eat + Drink Eat + Drink Eat



Blogfest



It's not just supper clubs popping up across the country, tea parties and, this month, blogging parties are springing up – right here in Cambridge.

The Secluded Tea Party began in the spring and is the brainchild of Miss Sue Flay (an alias, obviously, try saying it out loud). Sue holds her underground tea parties in secret locations in and around Cambridge, such is the mystery surrounding the venue, members don't even know the location for the party until just a few days before the event.

Sue always serves up a generous helping of tea, cake and sandwiches

but for her next date, is adding blogging into the mix too. A blogging enthusiast herself – The Secluded Tea Party actually launched online via Sue's own blog, thesecludedteapartyshhh.blogspot.com – where she has been writing about her baking for the last year or so. Now Sue is approaching all existing and would be bloggers to The Secluded Tea Party's first ever Blogfest, on Saturday, November 19. Avid bloggers and first timers will be joined by three guest speakers: BBC Radio & TV presenter and blogger, Liz Fraser, Mel Hollidge of Wired2Create and ReeRee

Rockette, blogger and creator of *Wonderful Women*, a support network for creative women in business.

As with all of the Secluded Tea Party events, the location will be disclosed to attendees just a few days before, but CB can tell you it will be around seven miles from the city centre and there will be plenty of homemade treats to enjoy while you blog!

Blogfest is priced £30 per person. To book your place visit thesecludedteapartyshhh.blogspot.com or email thesecludedteaparty@live.co.uk.

CB Magazine 11/2011

Miss Sue Flay recommends . . .

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, **The Secluded Tea Party** – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is **Jocalatte** in Burleigh Street.

How have I passed this lovely coffee shop so many times, yet never been inside? Located on Burleigh Street in Cambridge, Jocalatte is an independent coffee and Belgian chocolate store.

With beautiful vintage teacups and edible treats on view, the shop window

alone is enticing; inside, as well as tea tables, there are gifts and cards to browse. All in all, it's a great little place to spend half an hour and get away from the crowds.

They have a lovely courtyard garden to enjoy when the weather is kind, selling cute potted herbs from a vintage rack – such a great idea!

The staff are so friendly and offered a freshly-made sandwich if nothing took my fancy in the cabinet. However, I chose a moist piece of carrot cake and a

pot of English breakfast tea, which was very refreshing indeed.

This is a real girls' lunch location – no fiddly portion sizes here. I love it. And I think you all will too.

Read Miss Sue Flay's full write-up on the coffee shop at www.secludedteaparty.com



Sept 2011

Miss Sue Flay recommends . . .

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, **The Secluded Tea Party** – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is the café at **Abantu**, the fair trade shop in Bourn

Abantu is a small but perfectly formed fair trade shop, located in a stylishly converted barn on a working farm in the Cambridgeshire countryside.

Offering gifts sourced from third world countries – as well as locally made

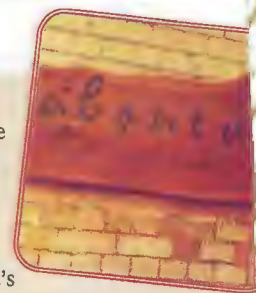
items such as jewellery and kitchenware – it's an Aladdin's Cave of gift ideas and a fantastic spot for tea and cake.

Tea is served in dainty teacups and beautiful china teapots and the cake selection takes pride of place on a large dresser for customers to drool over as they walk through the door.

I can highly recommend their moist and delicious carrot and walnut cake and the beetroot and pecan cake. Generous slices too, which is always a plus for me!

You could easily drive past this little gem without even knowing it's there, so please slow down and stop for a deserved break on your travels next time you are passing.

✦ Find out more about Miss Sue Flay's pop-up tearoom at www.secludedteaparty.com



Oct 2011

Miss Sue Flay recommends . . .

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, **The Secluded Tea Party** – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is the ice cream parlour at **Benets**, the café on Cambridge's King's Parade

Okay, technically ice cream isn't afternoon tea fodder – but I think it qualifies when you incorporate a dessert. . .

Benets has been a Cambridge treasure for years, serving us delicious coffee

and unique cakes and shortbreads, but it recently opened a 1950s-inspired ice cream parlour: fitted with red leather seats and high benches, its display of waffle cones and ever-changing ice cream choices is so eye-catching, you will want to try every single one as soon as you step through the door.

Each concoction is designed and produced in the basement of the café and varieties include Mocha, Ferrero Rocher, Apple Crumble and Bakewell Tart. I feel like a child again drooling over the colourful flavours!

You can sit and watch cyclists pass by and it's also a prime spot for admiring King's College, which sits right opposite this relaxing city centre haven.

Read Miss Sue Flay's full write up on Benets – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com



Nov 2011



Miss Sue Flay recommends . . .



Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is the tearoom at Southill Village Stores, just over the county border in Bedfordshire

This is a secluded tearoom that I almost didn't want to tell anybody about, but that just isn't fair. Set within a beautiful cottage in a peaceful Bedfordshire village, it's well worth the

short drive to visit, believe me. I found a quirky nook – with its own corner seating and a loaded bookshelf over the table – in what used to be a Post Office booth. I sat and read my book for two unbelievably peaceful hours while sipping on English breakfast tea and nibbling on a freshly-made egg and cress sandwich, elegantly presented on mismatching vintage china. I sat with the window open so that I got the smell of the stunning flowers from the adjacent garden.

Illustration: Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk

I honestly didn't want to leave and will be back soon: it's the perfect place to curl up by the fire, eat mince pies, and escape from the Christmas crowds. . .

+ Read Miss Sue Flay's full write-up on Southill – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com



Dec 2011

Miss Sue Flay recommends . . .



Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is Cambridge's Hotel du Vin

I recently enjoyed afternoon tea at one of Cambridge's most chic hotels, Hotel du Vin. The staff were friendly, right from booking my table to serving my rose-infused tea in their luxurious and peaceful library.

The afternoon tier boasted a selection of finger sandwiches including egg and cress, salmon, ham and mustard mayonnaise, as well as warm scones with clotted cream and strawberry jam. There was also a separate sweet tier serving chocolate chip cookies, chocolate drizzled strawberries, fruit tea loaf and my personal favourite, warm and dreamy melt-in-the-mouth brownies. Needless to say, you won't need to eat for the rest of the day.

This experience wasn't as formal

as I had expected, which is great if you make a mess. . . Not that I did of course! The chatty waiter asked what my plans were for the rest of the day. 'Snoozing' I responded: the perfect day off.

Read Miss Sue Flay's full write-up on Hotel du Vin – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – www.secludedteaparty.com



Illustration: Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk/www.jolio.co.uk

Jan 2012

Miss Sue Flay recommends . . .



Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is the newly reopened Fitzbillies bakery in Cambridge

The buns are back in town! That's right: Cambridge bakery Fitzbillies – famous for its sticky Chelsea buns – is back with a refreshingly subtle relaunch.

A fixture in the city for decades, the store closed unexpectedly earlier last year, then reopened under new

management in August.

Set on the corner of Trumpington Street, it serves the most delicious bacon sandwiches (complete with Rosie's homemade plum ketchup) for breakfast, as well as offering lunch and dinner menus throughout the week.

Their coffee choux buns are a must with their sticky topping and oozing cream filling and the legendary Chelsea buns are syrupy and even more irresistible. There's also a delicious savoury version, the cheesy bun: a Chelsea bun in appearance, but it

tastes like a cheese straw.

They have redesigned the bakery kitchen so you can quietly observe while sitting in the warm, cosy café enjoying a freshly-brewed cup of coffee or pot of tea.

What's really fun about the reopening is that they are playing with new recipes, making it different every time you visit. And I highly recommend that you do so.

+ Visit www.secludedteaparty.com



Miss Sue Flay recommends...

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, **The Secluded Tea Party** – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is the newly-opened **Teacake** in Shepreth

Thanks to my sensitive cake-sniffing nose and heightened sense of awareness when it comes to new tearooms, I couldn't resist visiting Teacake in Shepreth, an old post office turned picturesque tearoom and village stores.

Illustration : Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk/www.jolio.co.uk

The menu is already fantastically wide, offering a great selection of loose leaf teas and coffees, sandwiches, cakes, scones and some everyday provisions, such as freshly-baked bread, milk and free range eggs to take home with you, which is very handy indeed.

I ordered myself a pot of warming Darjeeling along with a moist slice of fruit tea loaf from their ever-changing cake selection, which came with a pretty little cake fork for a civilised nibble.

I also had great fun sipping from my mismatching china and watching the world go by while unwinding. Teacake couldn't be more welcoming if it tried: curled up by their open fireplace on a chilly afternoon, it's truly the perfect medicine.

Read Miss Sue Flay's full write-up on Teacake – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com



March 2012

Miss Sue Flay recommends...

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, **The Secluded Tea Party** – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is **Poppy's Tea Room** in Thaxted

Thaxted is the perfect getaway from the city on those days where you really fancy getting out for a while. As well as being the home of Dick Turpin, it's a peaceful town on the outskirts of Cambridgeshire with Poppy's Tea Room the absolute highlight.

Illustration : Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk/www.jolio.co.uk

The hosts were extremely knowledgeable and helpful, from my initial telephone booking right through to brushing away the crumbs after our heavenly feast. They knew their tea and suggested we went for their own Ceylon blend alongside our afternoon tier for two – it's truly the perfect match.

I chose warm fruit scones with the traditional trimmings, homemade lemon drizzle cake and a selection of finger sandwiches, including cucumber and a delicious salmon on fresh white bread.

The antique parlour tables were laid with floral tablecloths, perfectly white china and glistening silver cutlery beckoning to be used. My favourite discovery so far by miles, they even tell you not to rush and to make the most of the time.

Booking is a must for this cosy tearoom – quick sharp!

✦ Read Miss Sue Flay's full write up on Poppy's – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com

April 2012



Miss Sue Flay recommends. . .



Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is The Cambridge Belfry in Cambourne

Having lived right on the doorstep of The Cambridge Belfry for the last two years, I am now kicking myself for not sampling its afternoon tea delights sooner. Where do I start?

We had a selection of cute finger sandwiches – gorgeous ham and

chutney and smoked salmon which just melted in the mouth – followed by warm plain scones with clotted cream and strawberry preserve.

My favourite addition, as well as the fresh strawberries, was the raspberry cheesecake which was refreshing and unusual, making a welcome change.

We were offered a choice of loose-leaf tea or freshly ground coffee, served in simple white china.

This fabulous hotel is situated on a

lovely lake and offers a superb spa, should you wish to extend your lazy

afternoon. The lakeside lounge was lovely in the warmth of the sunshine from the tall windows; we honestly didn't want to leave.

Read Miss Sue Flay's full write-up on the Belfry – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com



Illustration : Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk/www.jolio.co.uk

May 2012

Miss Sue Flay recommends. . .



Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is Bill's Café in Cambridge

Bill's Café is based centrally, in Green Street, and was a real surprise to me when I tried their daily afternoon tea option for the first time. They serve juicy burgers, homemade wedges, fresh salads and even a British favourite in the form of a posh fish finger sandwich.

This place is more than a café, it's an Aladdin's cave of food and drink. While at your table, you can browse with your eyes and add your desired contents to a shopping list set at your place.

The staff will bring your gorgeous groceries to take home with you after your visit: such a refreshing idea and a treat for the hips!

The warm scones are almost like a tea loaf, sliced in thick wedges, served

with Bill's strawberry preserve and clotted cream. Matched with a pot of English Breakfast Tea, it's the perfect way to start a leisurely afternoon in Cambridge.

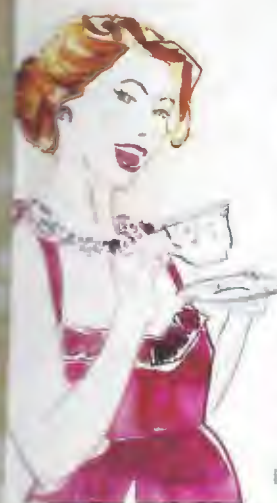
Read Miss Sue Flay's full write-up on Bill's – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com



Illustration : Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk/www.jolio.co.uk

June 2012

Miss Sue Flay recommends. . .



Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is Greens Coffee & Co, High Street, Cambourne

Greens is a family-run coffee shop in Cambourne that draws me back time and time again, due to its relaxed attitude towards tea and coffee – there's no snobbery here.

Serving loose-leaf tea and a huge selection of delicious cakes and bakes (my favourite being the lemon and blueberry layer cake with lemon curd buttercream: unmissable), as well as a wide range of freshly-made salads and sandwiches, their menu is ever changing and evolving.

You can even opt for a good old-fashioned ploughman's, now made to order, or venture into beautiful Spanish-inspired sharing platters and a glass of wine, available from 6pm – a

new development for this grown-up coffee bar.

Cocktails are served from noon onwards, offering an even more mature way of enjoying a slice of cake. . . Hiding on the High Street, next to a well-known supermarket, Greens is a little gem.

✦ Read Miss Sue Flay's full write-up on Greens – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com

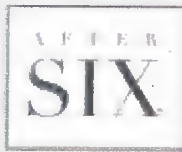


Illustration : Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk/www.jolio.co.uk

July 2012

Wedding ideas

Blog | [Wedding Ideas magazine](#)
The UK's best bridal mini-mag



[Skip to content](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Wedding Ideas Awards Posts](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Visit the Wedding Ideas magazine website](#)

Why an English tea party is perfect for any occasion. Yes, really

Like 19 Tweet 23 +1 2 1

Posted on [February 28, 2012](#) by [Rachel Southwood](#)

How the English tea party has become the new big thing...

English weddings are called that with good reason – they are renowned for special touches and details we (and the rest of the world) associate with films like *Gosford Park*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *The King's Speech*, and lest we forget (dare we mention?) *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

So, what classifies a wedding as truly English (as opposed to Scottish – I have a blog on this, too for a later date)? Well, there are quaint churches with history, green fields, bright umbrellas and [Weddington Boots](#), antique lace dresses with sleeves a la [Kate Middleton](#) and of course high tea. Tea parties are fast becoming the big thing, and with good reason.

For hen parties

Invariably you're going to have girls of all ages and 'conditions' at your hen party (yes, I know being pregnant isn't a condition, but it's not the only thing that stop people from drinking, so I've lumped all tee-totallers together. I hope you understand), so you'll need a spread that will appeal anyone younger than 18, old enough to know better, on antibiotics or pregnant. So, why not check into a gorgeous country hotel and have high tea (weather dependent) on the lawn, or in the dining room. You can still have Champagne, but serve it with tea, scones, clotted cream, jam and tea, all served up on beautiful vintage crockery. You could even have a teapot full of Pimm's...



For wedding receptions

Cake stands, cupcakes, Earl Grey, sandwiches cut in triangles – smoked salmon and cream cheese, ham and mustard, tuna and cress, egg mayo – scones, jam and clotted cream, even the ever-so-English vol au vent. Mini beef and ale pies, fish and chips in cones (both of which featured at my wedding) and you have the perfect post-wedding feast. And again, time for that bunting, vintage crockery and harp to feature. Add in children's laughter filling the air while they skid on their knees and climb trees, the scent of freshly mown lawns, croquet and straw boaters and you've got it sewn up. Well, maybe minus Hugh Grant and Colin Firth.

We asked our friends on Twitter to tell us what they think of when they think of a thoroughly English wedding and here's what they said...

Church in the village where I grew up, choir singing carols, bell ringers and flower arrangements by local ladies... @roogreen

An argument and girls dancing bare foot, high heels strewn across the dancefloor... @restorationcake

A fat guest crying on the stairs of the venue. Cake stuck to napkins. Sex in car parks. A pint in blistering sunshine... @iamstaggered

Um, I wasn't quite thinking along those lines when I tweeted, but have to admit it's tempting to add in 'jumping in the hotel's pool fully clothed' as a classic English wedding exploit.

In our real wedding section on our site, and on the pages of the magazine we're always featuring weddings with an [English country garden](#) theme (see, told you it was popular), but I'm also thrilled to share with you a gorgeous shoot by [Sue Flay](#) (say her name aloud) and [Debbie Wallwork](#) for some inspiration.

You should also check out the work of [Miss Poppy's Tea Party](#).

We're loving [The English Tea Party](#) for vintage crockery hire.

I love this [real wedding](#) where they played touch rugby on the lawn.

And finally, the [American take](#) on English weddings. Enjoy!

Rachel x

[Tweet This Post](#)

You might also like:

- [Forum Friday – Hen party heaven](#)

Posted in [Hen party ideas](#), [Styling your wedding](#), [Wedding reception](#) | Tagged [hen party](#), [high tea](#), [pregnant brides](#), [tea and scones](#), [tea party](#), [wedding reception](#) | [3 Comments](#)

3 Responses to *Why an English tea party is perfect for any occasion. Yes, really*

1. [Yvonne from White Gold Images](#) says:
[February 28, 2012 at 6:10 pm](#)

I LOVE a good English Tea Party, for weddings, parties or just a fun afternoon out with the girls. There is something about the nostalgia and a decadence that really appeals to the fun loving girly in me. I have already booked 2 weddings this year where the brides are planning a tea party theme and looking forward to them hugely! Thanks for reminding us about the good old fashioned tea party Wedding Ideas Mag XXX



Fighting food poverty with secret tea parties

Ella Walker took to the underground world of secret tea drinking and scone nibbling to find out how one Cambridge charity is helping keep people off the breadline

If you're a fan of cake and haven't heard of the Secluded Tea Party, run by Miss Sue Flay (AKA Jo - it's all a bit of a mystery, so no, we can't tell you her whole name!), then where have you been?

The travelling pop-up afternoon tea event, chock full of mismatched china, scones, cake and tea, is held in secret locations in and around Cambridge every few months.

"It basically started as my version of an underground restaurant," explains flame haired Miss Sue. "It's just a really great way to meet new people socially and make new friends."

Using her networking and baking skills to bring people together, her latest tea party, this weekend ("a little twisted, a little bit creepy" Alice and Mad Hatter themed tea party in the woods) will be to celebrate her birthday and raise money and awareness for the charity **FoodCycle Cambridge**.

FoodCycle was set up nationwide in 2008 with the idea of collecting surplus food from businesses to transform into tasty nutritious meals for people affected by poverty or a social change in the community – basically anyone in need of a cheap, hearty meal.

The Cambridge branch serves a free three course vegetarian lunch every Saturday at 12.30pm at St Paul's Church, but relies on generous donations and food gifts from local retailers such as Sainsbury's on Sussex Street, the Cambridge Farmer's Outlet on Lensfield Road, the Cambridge Fruit Company and a range of delis and cafes.

"We get little things from everywhere," explains Jen McConnell who runs FoodCycle Camb, recalling a student who got everyone on her course to donate the leftovers in their cupboards at the end of term. "Even half a bottle of olive oil can really help!"

With a love of all things foody and community focussed, Miss Sue Flay couldn't turn down an opportunity to support the charity, particularly after volunteering in the FoodCycle kitchen earlier this year.

"They are just fantastic," she enthuses, giving me a huge list of local businesses that have offered fund-raising raffle prizes to auction off at the tea party. "When I was there I was on soup duty and they have two massive vats of soup and there was this tiny little food processor.

"It took me about an hour and a half to zap it all. It took absolutely ages, so if we can raise enough to just buy an industrial food blender or something it's going to make life so much easier for them."

Jen explains how else you can get involved and help FoodCycle Cambridge

Volunteer in the kitchen: you don't have to cook if you don't want to, but if you do, you don't have to have lots of experience. Lots of the volunteers are good cooks, and there's lots of chopping to do!

Volunteer at front of house: the lunch is what we call a community meal, it's not a buffet. We serve at 12.30pm and like to sit down with the beneficiaries, share the meal and chat and get to know them as well as we can. You can get involved with this instead of cooking and help with a bit of washing up and clearing plates too.

Join our collection team: donations of food are collected on Friday afternoons and an extra pair of hands is always welcome.

Donate food: food from individuals as well as businesses is always welcome – as long as it is vegetarian.

Organise food drives and fundraisers: like Secluded Tea has!

Find Miss Sue Flay at www.secludedteaparty.com, on Twitter [@thesecludedtea](https://twitter.com/thesecludedtea) or email her at cake@secludedteaparty.com.

For more information about FoodCycle visit <http://foodcycle.org.uk> or follow the Cambridge group on Twitter [@FoodCycleCamb](https://twitter.com/FoodCycleCamb).

Comments

Your Email Address:*
(will not be published)

Your Name:*

Recent rain is helping to fill our garden pond



Lottie tells how a look through their builders' rubbish gleaned items for recycling

Experience the powers of flowers at Botanic Garden



EXOTIC flowers up to a metre in length have burst into bloom at Cambridge's Botanic Garden.

A tour of Cambridge's eco homes



With a month to go until the Open Eco Homes weekends, we take a look at some of the properties opening their eco-friendly doors

Edible garden to take root in East Chesterton



AN edible garden will be made in East Chesterton as part of drive to make the city more self-sufficient.

Up and down homes

It's mixed messages on the homes front, with estate agents in town telling different stories in the latest RICS survey.

Fighting food poverty with secret tea parties



Ella Walker took to the underground world of secret tea drinking and scone nibbling to find out how one Cambridge charity is helping keep people off the breadline

AFTERNOON TEA WITH A TWIST

Written by Nicola Foley on 26 April 2012.

Cambridge's clandestine cake meet coordinator Miss Sue Flay is co-hosting a 'Calendar of Bakes' on Sunday 29 April – a special afternoon tea event with the Cambridge Folk Museum. Guests will be able to tuck into delicious homemade cakes galore and enjoy an entertaining talk on the history and traditions of baking through the ages (2.30pm, £18 per person).

www.thesecludedteapartyshhh.blogspot.co.uk



photoshoot
with Debbie
Wallwork



Lifestyle



Time for Tea

With the forthcoming Diamond Jubilee celebrations just weeks away and a very well known tea company about to launch an exciting commemorative blend, the status of afternoon tea has never been so fashionable and highly regarded.

The Queen came to the throne in 1952, aged just 25 and having been only the second monarch to mark 60 years on the throne. She shares the same outstanding achievement with Queen Victoria, her fellow afternoon tea fanatic. Afternoon tea with The Queen is one of the most highly anticipated events of the summer calendar.

Every year, The Queen invites approximately 8,000 of her subjects to an afternoon garden party at Buckingham Palace, extending the invitation to people who have achieved something great or who deserve recognition for serving their country. Her equerries select a chosen few to have a conversation with Her Majesty during this two hour affair, before allowing guests to enjoy the very secluded retreat that is Buckingham Palace gardens, of which tourists cannot even get a glimpse of from a double decker bus on an ordinary day in London. If attending, you would find yourself being pampered by one of the Queens 400 servers, who offer 20,000 finger sandwiches and over 20,000 miniature cakes alongside loose leaf tea and coffee. Included within the delicious cake selections, miniature Battenbergs can be found, aptly chosen, since



the Windsors used to be known as the Mountbattens.

With many dishes created especially for Queen Victoria in her honour during her reign, including Cherries Jubilee, a truly grand Victorian pudding, our current Queen deserves an equally superb creation to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. We have heard that Betty's of Harrogate have been honored with the task of doing just this, so we have high expectations and are very intrigued to see what momentous pudding they conjure up for this summer.

We will be running our very own workshop this summer on the etiquette of afternoon tea. To find out more about the manners behind both hosting and enjoying afternoon tea, please do join us on Saturday 15th September 2012 at a very secret location in Cambridge at a suitably luxurious venue. Limited spaces available at just £50, to include an etiquette workshop by www.williamhanson.co.uk and a lavish afternoon tea hosted by Miss Sue Flay of www.secludedteaparty.com. To find out more or to book a place, just email cake@secludedteaparty.com.

Miss Sue Flay recommends...

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is the Brasserie within Cambridge's John Lewis store

The Brasserie at John Lewis, Cambridge, is a gorgeous space with peaceful views of the University Arms Hotel and surrounding colleges. With huge ceiling-high windows, the natural light in this airy room makes it

a calming retreat within the very heart of the city.

You can either sit in the Espresso Coffee Bar for a quick brew and a pastry or grab a booth or window seat in the main Brasserie, which serves breakfast, lunch, and even Sunday roast dinners – and there's no need to book!

I naturally went for the 'afternoon tea tier', which was fantastic value, complete with finger sandwiches, scones, a selection of cakes (including a

chocolate brownie-style French fancy which was amazing) – not forgetting a refreshing pot of tea.

I couldn't fault the staff in any way: they were friendly, knowledgeable and nothing was too much trouble. Why on earth have I never thought to give them a try before?

✦ Read Miss Sue Flay's full write-up on John Lewis – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com

Illustration: Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk / www.jolio.co.uk

Sept '12



Miss Sue Flay recommends...

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is Betty Marshmallow in Ely

If you go down to Ely today, you're sure of a big surprise... If you like cupcakes and all things naughty and nice, you'll be pleased to hear that Ely is finally home to a fabulous new cupcakery.

Betty Marshmallow offers a wide selection of made-to-order sandwiches, as well as salads and savouries, and all manner of sweet treats, including milkshakes, ice creams, cakes and tray bakes. The store, on Chequers Lane, also stocks a large range of cake and craft supplies, small gifts and cake stands.

With cupcake flavours such as rocky road, orange and almond, Oreo, cherry Bakewell, amaretto, vanilla and black cherry and – my favourite –

jam and peanut butter, you are spoilt for choice.

The staff are friendly, yet polite, and I don't feel like I'm being watched while I wander round, deciding what I want to buy. Well worth a visit.

✦ Read Miss Sue Flay's full write up on Betty Marshmallow – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com

Illustration: Jo Fernihough see www.jofernihough.co.uk / www.jolio.co.uk

Oct '12



Miss Sue Flay recommends...

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is Caffe Mobile in Cambridge Market Square

Wandering around Cambridge, sometimes there just isn't time to stop for long when in need of a strong cuppa and a wedge of cake. This is when Caffe Mobile in the Market

Square comes in handy, with its cute miniature van parked in the bustle of one of Cambridge's busiest spots.

The van serves tea and quality coffee, including cappuccinos, lattes and a signature espresso, not forgetting generous slabs of flapjack and gooey chocolate brownies (or the more unusual blondies). Expect a big slice to either take away with you or munch while perched on the beautiful fountain in the middle of the market.

The Caffe Mobile guys are so friendly

and I keep bumping into them around Cambridgeshire at various events – including the LodeStar Festival this summer, where they also provided a welcome caffeine fix.

Caffe Mobile is proof that good things really do come in small packages.

✦ Read Miss Sue Flay's full write-up on Caffe Mobile – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com

Illustration: Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk / www.jolio.co.uk

Nov '12

NOV 2012 - STYLE MAG.

**FOOD
NEWS**

VS
BY LOUISE CUMMINGS



www.cymru-101.com

English, was planned to be broadcast to watch by Great TV, since the Great British Sale 2011, while taking the first two good looks.

Major 30 members of the Cambridge University College had visited the first exhibition.

Matthews then, having arranged by Cambridge students who had been

The exhibition was well-received, with the first two

"You could hear a pin drop. It was hilarious, tense all at the time."

Former OGA Members of the cake
club made sure they did not go hungry
Picture: Kath Heppell 867495



The Cambridge TWITTER LIST

If you're not on Twitter you're missing out. Used correctly, it's an amazing tool for networking, meeting new people, engaging with your community and getting to know your area. Here's our guide to Cambridge's tweet elite



YOU'VE OPENED a Twitter account. Now what? The world of retweets, hashtagging and 'ff's' can seem mighty confusing, even impenetrable at first. So how to get started? Step one is working out who to follow. And whilst there's many a tweetaholic celeb, in our book your best bet is to start local.

We've got a remarkably diverse and active community of tweeters here in Cambridge, who will happily keep you in the loop about all manner of topics. Give the right people a follow and hey presto – you've got a tailored, interactive newsfeed, filled with 140 character snippets of news and info on what's happening in your community and local area.

There are literally hundreds of local groups, companies and individuals merrily tweeting away about what's going on in Cambridgeshire, discussing everything from new restaurant openings and independent retailers to council meetings, traffic updates and local charity initiatives.

Ickleton-based tweeter Deepa Mistry (@LazyGiraffe), uses Twitter to interact with fellow Cambridge residents. "I'll always be able to get a great recommendation for a place to

go via my followers," she says. "Twitter might be a huge place but it is a great way to find local knowledge." She has used Twitter to build up both her handmade jewellery business and food blog, as well as making a whole new set of friends who she met online but have now become 'real life' friends too.

Another local lady, who goes under the alias of Miss Sue Flay (@TheSecludedTea), has used the marketing potential of Twitter to great effect, building her business from scratch through tweeting, and now holds hugely popular tea and cake meets where she plays hostess in a secret venue.

Many businesses in the area use Twitter to interact with customers and shout about new products and services. So much so in fact, that on a Wednesday night you can follow #CambsHour, an online meet up for local businesses to gather and get to know each other better. It's basically incredibly targeted networking (without having to leave your sofa or endure awkward silences over canapés).

Of course it can also be a platform for airing your views and debating the issues that matter to you, as Richard Taylor, a local independent journalist can testify. "Twitter helps me get involved in discussions on how we run our

society," he says. "Sometimes we have to talk about difficult and controversial issues. I campaign for openness and transparency and so using Twitter – an open public platform – for debate, is appropriate in my view."

Cambridge politicians also use the social media outlet to keep their constituents up to date. As Cambridge Liberal Democrat MP Julian Huppert explains, "I can let followers know where I am and what I'm doing, while at the same time giving them the chance to raise issues with me."

So how do you make the most of Twitter and connect with as many people in your area as possible? Charlotte Griffiths, a local editor and photographer has some great advice. "One of the best tips for new tweeters is not to forget that Twitter's a two-way street, and that you shouldn't just broadcast your news. Ask questions of your community and get recommendations by all means, but don't forget to answer questions and give recommendations where you can as well."

Here's our guide to who to follow (and it really is the tip of the Twitter iceberg – there are hundreds of great local tweeters) and some basic Twitter do's and don'ts for you to tweet by. ➤

food

**@AfternoonTease**

WHO? aka Jo Kruczynska, a local lady who whips up delicious cakes for local cafes including Hot Numbers and Urban Larder, as well as being

co-host (with Ivana Gresham, aka @Misslgs) of *Foodie's Anonymous Supper Club*.

SHE SAYS "Twitter makes it easy for me to share my cake recipes and pictures and has put me in touch with so many great people. Just what I need the speed that news travels."

WE SAY The lady in the foodie know. Expect lots of new openings and local must-try. Plus a steady stream of photos of her delicious creations and links to her blog.

@JustCookIt

WHO? Alex Rushmer aka our resident food writer/ Masterchef finalist/owner of The Hole in the Wall in Little Wilbraham

SHE SAYS "It's an immediacy to Twitter that facilitates conversation, debate and thought like no other social media tool. If I want an immediate response to an idea or a dish then it goes on Twitter and the feedback is varied, honest and instant."

WE SAY Alex will tempt you with new dishes destined for the menu at his restaurant, as well as giving great recommendations. Expect foodie chat, plus miscellaneous opinions on everything from obscure bands to politics.

**@TheSecludedTea**

WHO? In the business of tea and cake, Miss Sue Flay tweets about local food news and her regular tea parties

SHE SAYS "I have an entire network of friends and contacts who I have met purely through the power of Twitter. It is constantly helping me to answer questions, be it where to buy poppy seeds from, to who will win

the Great British Bake Off – it's my online bible. My followers are a constant supply of advice, inspiration and support and I can't recommend it enough."

WE SAY Miss Sue Flay has the goss on lots of foodie ventures – from supper clubs to cakey gatherings and she is one of the friendliest people on Twitter – always there with a recommendation and smiley face.



It's time for TEA



Inspired by a love of baking – and a shared ambition to run their own business – Christine and Maurice Prove have turned Shepreth's former post office into a small but perfectly formed tearoom. Miss Sue Flay, Journal tea and cake correspondent, pays a visit

PICTURES BY LIQUID PHOTO – www.liquidphoto.co.uk

Walking through the door at Teacake in the sleepy village of Shepreth, the first thing that greets you is the warmest welcome imaginable from the owners of this pretty tearoom.

Husband and wife team Maurice and Christine Prove, from Orwell, have transformed this Grade I listed building into the area's best-kept secret. With Christine's passion for baking and the idea of running a tearoom consuming them both, they decided to take the plunge – and served their first customers a year ago this month.

It's a stunning building to explore both inside and out. The interior feels like an old 1940s tea parlour, being very homely and warm with flowers handpicked from the garden in cute vases and milk jugs on top of the small wooden tables.

The Proves first flipped their open sign in November 2011, with a soft launch to allow their new project to evolve naturally and for any creases to be ironed out before they got too busy. What they hadn't anticipated was that their busy first day would be emulated throughout the rest of the year, no matter what the weather.

"We had to learn the ropes fast, with one of the biggest challenges being to ensure the dishwasher was ready for crockery, while still keeping up with customers walking through the door. We accidentally roped in some close friends to wash-up for us on the first afternoon: they were a saviour," says Maurice, who admits that with no catering background before this venture, he had no idea how much bread (sourced from the Cambridge-based Cobs Bakery) or milk to buy for the small shop housed within the tearoom.

"The building used to be a village post office and offered basic supplies for the locals, so we wanted to keep that stock available here for the convenience of our customers," he explains. The produce on sale is locally sourced wherever possible, with Cam Valley Orchards in nearby Melbourn supplying the apple juice stocked on the shelves and offered on the tearoom menu.

Every treat, both sweet and savoury, served at Teacake's tables is homemade and baked by the couple in their small galley kitchen at the rear of the cottage, overlooking a stunning and quintessentially English walled

rose garden. There are seats outside for customers who fancy eating al fresco on lazy summer days or a having a quick tea break with the dog at their heel, should they be walking past.

Teacake's menu is reasonably priced and ever changing, depending on Christine's mood and what's in season. "We have regular customers who come in on specific days of the week, so we like to ensure their favourites will be there waiting for them, freshly made," she smiles.

"Flapjacks will always be there on a Wednesday, with Thursdays being a surprise day, mostly giving me a chance to try out a new tray bake – depending what I've found while digging into recipe books throughout the week. Fridays are host to our gooey chocolate brownies and Saturdays are traditionally a day for our signature fruit scones, which are always very popular."

She says a classic cream tea can be ordered with two fist-sized scones and a pot of loose-leaf every day, as it's a firm favourite with everyone. On the day I visit, the fruit scones have been just been baked and as I chat away to Christine, I find myself »



» tucking into one (with a generous helping of butter and strawberry jam, served in a gorgeous miniature milk jug, which makes it so much fun to dip into).

Christine continues to reel off the list of mouth-watering treats she makes for her large cake display, including a buttery lavender shortbread which sits on the counter with fresh lavender decorating the plate. She assures me there is always a traditional deep-filled Victoria sponge, a very addictive tiffin for chocolate lovers, and also a gluten-free option most of the time.

The Proves not only serve the sweet stuff, but porridge is available for a bite at breakfast and savoury snacks are just as much of a focus on the menu, handwritten on the large chalkboard behind the main counter. Today, there's mushroom soup made with flat Suffolk mushrooms and smoked salmon (in fact smoked especially for Teacake, using fine oak shavings), which is served with salad and seeded bread from Cobs.

Sandwiches vary from the traditional cheese and pickle, egg mayonnaise and cress, brie and grape, and pastrami and gherkin, to chicken and mango for the more adventurous sarnie lover.

'The retro and vintage theme is back in every way. . . Gone are the days where the clubs and pubs are the only place to be seen'

Christine gets asked to make many birthday and celebration cakes for her customers. "People always tell me my sponge cakes are light and fluffy and they couldn't recreate them if they tried. They know that if they go to a supermarket, they won't get the sort of quality and satisfaction they get from something baked with the finest local ingredients we offer here. I find that when people go to pay me, they are always prepared to pay a lot more than we charge them."

Teacake is the perfect place to sit with a book, either one of your own or one of the many hardbacks filling the dresser in the main tearoom. It's a countryside retreat that feels like home. You can sit and while away an hour or two very easily and your stay is welcomed; you're never rushed or pushed out of your seat.

And it's not just those of more mature years who favour Teacake. "The retro and

vintage theme is back in every way of late," explains Christine. "One type of customer that seems to be growing in number is the young man taking his young lady out for a civilised date over tea and cake. Gone are the days where the clubs and pubs are the only place to be seen. These lads know how to impress the ladies and the mismatching china and a quiet place to sit and get to know each other charms the girls no end."

Maurice shows me the beautiful china tea sets stacked neatly under the modern Monmouth Coffee machine, with each set having its own story to tell. Some customers even request a favourite teacup each time they visit. "We try to remember our customers' favourite sets and impress them when we get it right. We also love to match china to our customers: the men will get the more masculine china, while the ladies will be served with the daintier cups and saucers."

You couldn't host a successful tearoom without sourcing the perfect loose-leaf blends. Stocking Butterworth's Tea from Suffolk, Teacake offers everything from the usual English Breakfast and Earl Grey through to a quirkier selection of Christine's favourites: Blue Lady, Green Gunpowder



and even a wintry chai, which has a surprising hint of marzipan, perfect for autumnal days.

"We try to convert and educate people on loose-leaf tea when they ask us for 'a good strong cup of builder's'. We have nothing against a cup of PG, but you just can't beat the beautiful teas in our jars. People are welcome to have a sniff and even buy a pack as a gift or treat if they find a blend they fall in love with."

Maurice is equally passionate about the Monmouth Coffee. You can order anything from an espresso to a flat white and the strength and quality of this London-based coffee shines through each cup that is poured.

"Monmouth Coffee has just two retail outlets, both in London, and the queues trail out of the doors. We joined the queue one day before we opened Teacake, in the name of research. We'd heard great things about their coffee and it didn't disappoint."

On having a nosey around the counters and shelves (the main front counter is in fact the old post office hatch, stripped down and painted beautifully to match the country cottage style), you will

discover a fast-expanding range of local produce.

Your finds might include honey from an apiarist just down the road in Barrington, free range eggs from 10 Acre Farm in Kneesworth and Wobbly Bottom cheeses from Hitchin, including a hard goat's cheese made with nettles, and a range of soft cheeses, one with piri piri and one smoked with garlic.

Teacake has seen Christine (who, after 17 years of working for a local veterinary clinic, fancied a change) and Maurice (persuaded by his wife to follow a dream) tick a very challenging project off their shared bucket list.

But I was curious as to how they came up with the tearoom's catchy name, now scrolled across the wooden sign (designed and hand-written by their eldest daughter, Emma) outside the front door.

"Well, it was quite a discussion at the time, but it came to me one day while I was baking and it just suited the style of the building. Maurice had originally thought of a clever and modern name – 'Ate', a pun on the cottage number being eight – but 'Teacake' just rolled off the tongue. We felt it was memorable." I can only agree.

Miss Sue Flay is mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party. You can read her column on our Food News pages every month. To find out more about Miss Sue and her business, go to www.secludedteaparty.com

Teacake is at 8 Meldreth Road, Shepreth, SG8 6PS. Opening times are 9am to 5.30pm from Wednesday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm on Saturdays, and 10.30am to 4.30pm on Sundays. Find out more by visiting www.teacakeatshepreth.co.uk or calling 07565 567023.



Winter comfort... on a plate

If I'm ever asked to appear on Desert Island Discs (clearly the kind of eventuality one has to plan for in life), I have decided what my permitted luxury would be: I'd like a large cake helicoptered to my island every Friday afternoon, preferably on a pretty china plate, please, Kirsty.

I'd like to receive a different flavour each week: carrot one Friday, lemon drizzle the next, then maybe a nice coffee and walnut or a classic Victoria... Or even a tray of wee fondant fancies – I do love those. Because, in my opinion, life without cake is, well, not really life at all.

You can stuff your brittle biscuits and waxy chocolate bars: for me, nothing trumps a slice of squidgy sponge, heavy with frosting and sticky with sugar.

Thanks largely to TV's *Great British Bake Off* (Mary and Paul being, without doubt, the best kitchen-based double-act since Fanny and Johnny), cake is currently enjoying a moment in the sun. Every other recipe book published seems to be dedicated to baking, with everyone – from models (Lorraine Pascale, Sophie Dahl) to novelists (Marian Keyes) – rushing to share their cake secrets.

So we decided to board the baking bandwagon and dedicate November's *Journal* to cake. We've found you the perfect baking kit (page 41), a selection of delicious recipes (page 82) and even put some classic bakes through their paces (page 70 onwards): in our own version of the bake off, five members of the *Journal* team put a signature recipe to the test – including Nigella's brownies and Delia's Victoria sponge – with some mixed results...

Miss Sue Flay, *Journal* tea and cake correspondent (you'll find her column on our Food News pages every month), went to meet the owners of Teacake, a post office turned tearoom in Shepreth. Impressed by the freshly-baked scones, whipped out of the oven just as she arrived, Miss Sue takes tea on page 76.

We've also got an interview with the new owners of iconic Cambridge bun shop Fitzbillies, who've brought the business back from the brink. It closed last summer and appeared a lost cause – until food writer Tim Hayward and wife Alison Wright, a marketing expert, took the helm. Fast gaining a reputation for serving top-notch evening meals (broadsheet reviews are glowing), it transpires Fitzbillies is now far more than a bakery (page 26).

If you've not got a sweet tooth, never fear: elsewhere in the *Journal* we shine a spotlight on some of the county's finest war memorials (page 13), take a tour of three newly-designed Cambridgeshire kitchens (page 45) and take a trip on Nene Valley Railway – aboard a steam train (page 60).

All that talk of cake has left my tummy grumbling. Slice of Battenberg, anyone?

Alice

Alice Ryan CONTENT EDITOR

This was my first big Cambridge Journal piece & I'm stupidly proud of it! (See last few pages)



Glamour is never out of fashion

A COFFEE shop in Cambourne took on a glamorous air as about 40 women learned how to apply makeup the old way.

At the first Vintage Glamour Makeup Workshop, run by The Secluded Tea Party, vintage makeup artist Michelle Bullivant and her team taught them how to do their faces in various styles.

Cocktails were on hand thanks to Greens Coffee and Co and cakes were baked by The China and Cakes Company, in Cambridge.

Organiser Miss Sue Flay, who lives in Cambourne, said: "It was a fantastic night. Guests were so game for it and really excited. They all looked so beautiful – it's such a shame they had to go home instead of going out to show off their makeup."

"There is clearly a demand for this sort of thing because it was a sellout and after having such a good response we'll have to run another one."



GLAMOUR GIRLS: The vintage makeup workshop night in full swing at Cambourne

Miss Sue Flay recommends...

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is Pinnies in Godmanchester

Co-owned by four lovely ladies with a passion for home-baked food, a very cute little tearoom opened in Godmanchester recently – and it was about time I got down there.

The smell of a lemon sponge fresh out of the oven hit me as I walked in, cooling on a wire rack, ready for the lunchtime rush. Sweet treats included chocolate sponge, Victoria sponge, coffee or carrot cake and even apple pie which could be warmed for the sweet-toothed customer wanting a piece.

I ordered a pot of English breakfast tea fit for three vintage teacups and a soft poppy-seeded roll with rashers of the thickest, tastiest bacon I've enjoyed in a long while.

They serve the biggest fruit scones I've ever seen and an afternoon tea tier will cost you just £7.95.

Pinnies seems to bring out the best behaviour in everybody, young and old. I'm in love.

✦ Read Miss Sue Flay's full write up on Pinnies – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com

Illustration: Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk / www.jolio.co.uk



Dec. 2012

Terrible presents!

CRAP GIFT SWAP!

We'd met online back in 2002 and, luckily,

Tearing off the silver wrapping paper, my heart sank.

A radio in the shape of a cupcake!

What on earth had my mother been thinking of?

'Thanks!' I said to my mum, Lesley, 43, brightly, with my best forced smile. 'Just what I always wanted...'

'You're welcome, sweetheart,' she beamed, happily.

It was Christmas 2010, and I was more than a little used to polite Yuletide etiquette.

And I was pretty sure I wasn't the only one!

Since childhood, I'd been given Christmas presents I didn't want – brightly coloured socks, boxes of smellies and novelty mugs.

One year, when I was about 16, Mum had bought me a make-up palette and a

South Park toy.

'I don't wear make-up and I hate *South Park*!' I whispered to my sister, Alex, 24.

'Just keep smiling,' she said, through gritted teeth, giving me a playful nudge.

After that, it was the same thing every year. Socks, fluffy

Just what I always wanted!

cushions, novelty slippers... you name it, I got it – and pretended to like it!

Desperate not to hurt Mum's feelings, I never dared ask for the receipt, so I could exchange or return things.

I simply hid the unwanted gifts at the back of my cupboard.

'What a waste!' my boyfriend, Duncan Hankins, 32, tutted, as I stashed away yet another bag of unwanted things.

knowing my track record with unwanted presents, Duncan always took me gift shopping instead of buying something I might not like.

Seeing him scowl now, as I closed the wardrobe door, I whined, 'What else can I do? I don't want to hurt her feelings.'

'Well, you could at least get some cash for them or something,' he mumbled. So, I decided that was exactly what I'd do...

In January 2011, I packed up the cupcake radio, and lots of other odds and ends I no longer wanted, and went to a local car boot sale.

On the day, Mum came along to help and, without thinking, I let her see my wares.

'Jo, what's that?'

she asked, pointing at something on my trestle table.

It was too late, she'd spotted the



Duncan gave me the idea

My Crap Christmas Gift Party was a big success!

cupcake radio!

'Sorry, Mum,' I gulped. 'It just wasn't my style...'

But I thought you liked cupcakes,' she said.

'I like *eating* them...' I said. Luckily, Mum was fine with it, and even started making jokes.

'You'll get nothing but a lump of coal next year!' she chuckled. I sold the radio for a tenner, and made about £100 in total, selling everything from unwanted smellies to cuddly toys, mugs, handbags and hoody tops, donated by family and friends.

Sadly, when Christmas 2011 dawned, my presents from Mum seemed worse, not better!

This time there were cupcake-shaped hand warmers and a Crissy Rock DVD. *I didn't even know who she was!*

But I had a cunning plan...

In early 2011, I'd begun holding monthly pop-up events called The Secluded Tea Party, all over Cambridgeshire, as a sideline to

my job as a university administrator.

Tea, cake and a natter with mates,

it was the perfect way to bring people together. I'd even run Easter and Halloween-themed ones!

Now Mum's presents had given me a great idea.

'I'm going to host a Crap Christmas Gift Party!' I said to Duncan.

'Where you give people crap Christmas gifts?' he frowned.

'No!' I laughed. 'I'll ask everyone to bring along a present they received but didn't want, and then people can swap.'

'Well, I guess one man's trash is another man's treasure,' Duncan agreed.

So, I arranged the party for 29 January at a village hall in Harlton, Cambridgeshire.

Festive music played and I served turkey sandwiches, mince pies, champagne and tea.

In total, 17 guests brought their unwanted Christmas presents, which I'd asked them

to rewrap for a bit of fun.

'Everyone sit in a circle,' I instructed.

Then we played pass the parcel until everyone had a gift!

I unwrapped mine to find a lovely wicker heart decoration on a string.

'It's gorgeous,' I smiled.

'I'll hang it on my door!'

I couldn't believe someone had given it away!

Another guest was thrilled to unwrap my DVD, and another was really chuffed with a posh Parker pen.

At the end of the evening, only a giant mug and a loo roll holder were left unwanted.

'I can't believe what a success it was!' I beamed to Duncan that evening.

'You'll have to do another one next year!' he said.

And that's exactly what I'm planning to do.

Luckily, Mum doesn't mind at all. She can't seem to help buying me things I don't like – but at least now she knows they'll go to a loving home!

Sue Flay, 28, Cambridge, Cambs

Miss Sue Flay recommends...

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is Quy Mill Hotel

Recently awarded two AA rosettes, Quy Mill is surprisingly peaceful for a hotel set just beside the A14. Situated on the outskirts of Stow-cum-Quy, the former watermill boasts all mod-cons – including an acclaimed restaurant and a newly-opened Imagine Spa.

Illustration: Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk/www.jolio.co.uk

When we dropped in for afternoon tea, the mister went for a pot of Fontaleza coffee and I chose Sapphire Earl Grey, which came in a generous-sized teapot.

A set of simple plates on a metal-domed stand, the tea tier was filled with sandwiches in four flavours – including Bottisham smoked salmon and cucumber and chive cream cheese – along with scones and cakes.

The fruit scones were served warm with strawberry jam and clotted cream; no measly portions here. The cakes included



carrot with cream cheese swirls, a moist lemon drizzle and a fruit tartlet with fresh nectarine and vanilla cream.

The service was extremely friendly, fast and non-intrusive. I highly recommend taking tea at Quy Mill – next time I go, I may even book a pamper day to go with it!

Read Miss Sue Flay's full write up on Quy Mill – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com

Jan 2013

Miss Sue Flay recommends...

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is Café Diem in Milton Country Park

Tucked away in the grounds of Milton Country Park, Café Diem is a hidden treasure. I discovered it when I joined the local Beg Bicycles Joy Ride one sunny morning: their mission is to take a

leisurely ride, nattering about my favourite subject, afternoon tea, while sniffing out coffee and cake stops along the way.

I went for a large cappuccino and a gluten-free Bakewell slice, which was a little crumbly but melted in the mouth – delicious. Café Diem also offers locally-made ice cream, should the weather be warmer, as well as deep-filled sandwiches, paninis and the longest selection of hot chocolates I've ever seen.

We sat outside on a generous bench,

perfect for groups of our size to sit together comfortably, enjoying the last of the sunshine and admiring the muddy-but-happy dogs that passed as we tucked into our refreshments.

The park is beautiful: the perfect location for a post-cake-demolishing wander.

Read Miss Sue Flay's full write up on Café Diem – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com



Illustration: Jo Fernihough – see www.jofernihough.co.uk/www.jolio.co.uk

Miss Sue Flay recommends...

Every month, Cambridge tea and cake aficionado Miss Sue Flay – mistress of her own pop-up tearoom, The Secluded Tea Party – lets us in on a local secret. Her latest discovery is Kim's Tea & Coffee House in Saffron Walden

Kim's Tea & Coffee House is a haven for hot drink lovers: with jars upon jars of loose-leaf tea and fine coffee on display, it took a long time to settle on our tipple of fancy.

The mister chose a cappuccino with a shot of Belgian chocolate sauce, while I decided on Rose Grey tea. Its scent was as beautiful as it sounds: a take on Earl Grey, but with a rose infusion.

The cakes are made on site where possible and I was tempted by a plateful of homemade teacakes. But in the end we plumped for home-baked crumpets with butter melting into the holes: all we needed was a roaring fire to make it perfect!

You can buy a packet of your favourite tea or coffee to take away with you. The staff really know their stuff: just tell them what you do or don't like and they'll advise. It's a really nice finishing touch.

Read Miss Sue Flay's full write up on Kim's – and find out more about her own pop-up tearoom – at www.secludedteaparty.com



March 2013

WILLIAM HANSON

MISS SUE FLAY



AFTERNOON TEA ETIQUETTE WORKSHOP

Saturday 6th April 3pm-5pm

£50

AT HOTEL DU VIN CAMBRIDGE- Book at Cake@secludedteaparty.com

Includes workshop & afternoon tea

www.secludedteaparty.com

Feb 2013

If you've got a passion
for baking, now's the time to
share the love – at Cambridge's
Clandestine Cake Club.
The Journal's Leanne Ehren
indulges her sweet tooth

PICTURES BY DUNCAN LAMONT



ON YOUR MARKS GET SET... BAKE

You bake a cake, eat cake and talk about cake – it's as simple as that. Well, it should be as simple as that, but in my case, the first part was not as easy as I had hoped. Regardless of the way the oven had overcooked my cake – yes it was the oven's fault and not mine – there I was, walking in to a coffee shop about to meet the Cambridge Clandestine Cake Club for the first time.

The club had hired out Green's Coffee and Co, in Cambourne, for the evening's get-together and when I opened the door my jaw hit the floor in awe at some of the concoctions that had been created.

Cocktails, Cuppas and Cake was the theme for the evening and some members had taken it to the extreme, turning well-known cocktails, such as bellinis and mojitos, into baked delights, complete with martini glasses and paper umbrellas.

From simple Victoria sponge adaptations to intricate Bundt cakes, there was everything on the table in front of me – with many of the members saying they had just 'made it up' as they went along.

Exploring creativity and trying out new things is half of what the club is about; the other half is about enjoying slice after slice of delicious sweet treats.

Since the club was set up by Cambridgeshire baking goddess – and resident *Journal* cake expert – Miss Sue Flay, nearly two years ago now, it has ballooned from six members to nearly 100.

Miss Sue, who runs pop-up tearoom business The Secluded Tea Party, explains: "The Clandestine Cake Club was set up

with a lady in Leeds who was running pop-up tearooms like me. I met her at an event and we got chatting and she said she wanted to set up something for free that brought people together who loved to bake."

Shortly after their conversation at the start of 2011, the first Clandestine Cake Club meetings were held in Cambridge, Leeds and Manchester – and so the free club, open to all, was born.

Since then, more than 150 clubs have popped up all over the country, including local groups in Ely, Brompton and Bury St Edmunds.

Every person I spoke to at the Cambridge meet-up said exactly the same thing: it's all about cake! "We love the big layer cakes, Bundt cakes, and sponges. No cookies, brownies, cupcakes or tray bakes allowed," says Miss Sue. »

**'It's all about cake! We love
the big layer cakes'**



Baking blogger Deepa Mistry, from *clandestine*, is co-host with Miss Sue, and says influences like BBC TV's *Great British Bake Off* have definitely encouraged more women, and especially men, to get in the kitchen.

"It's the science of baking that seems to interest men," says the 28-year-old. "So many people who come here love to experiment and that's what it's about. Some of us are professional bakers and by practising you get to learn so much."

The club meets up on an ad-hoc basis every few weeks and switches its locations between city and village sites, with some businesses like Greens Coffee opening specially to host the event.

Many of the members are keen Twitter users and bloggers who discovered the club online. At a previous meeting, when lots of new faces turned up at once, everyone was introducing themselves by their Twitter name.

Twitter user Louise Jenkins has a gluten-intolerant husband so loves coming to cake clubs to make 'real cakes'. "For me, it's about meeting local people I chat to and share ideas with on Twitter. They were all enthusing about this cake club, so I just had to come along. We all share a common love of cake, so conversation is never a problem..."

With so many different cakes to try, members sit at dinner and share slices so they can have a little taste of as many cakes as possible.

"We all share a common love of cake, so conversation is never a problem..."

'Dedicated eater' Sally Schumacher, from Cambridge, managed to put away eight slices the night we met. She says: "I don't bake, but I always come as a guest. It's so much fun to come along with a friend and taste all these wonderful cakes in one evening. It's such a good idea."

Sally's 'baker', Fiona Brown, a full-time mum, has been to every club meeting this year. "The cakes bring us together – you get to meet lots of people you wouldn't usually meet," she comments. "People come along with fabulous ideas. They can really pick the flavours and I've learned a lot. Whether there are 22 cakes or six cakes, it's just as nice."

Although not 'professionals' in their own eyes, some of the members have a baking background, including owner of an online French patisserie company, Corinne Payet. The Cottenham mum-of-two, who is originally from French colony Reunion Island, says: "I'm not really a professional baker – I wasn't trained professionally, I just had a mother who cooked very well and I learned from her."

"I do a lot of farmers' markets with my business and this is a great way of trying out new recipes. I'm having a lot of fun and it's nice to have people who like cakes to give you an honest opinion."

Karen Jefferson also used to bake cakes for a living while her children were growing up – but she confessed to me that she doesn't actually like to eat cake anymore. The 50-year-old from Newmarket says: "I just love creating and making cakes."

"There are a lot of people that really enjoy baking that don't have an outlet for it. People don't have the chance to get really creative at home when all they're doing is cooking for their children and husband. It's nice to have a reason to bake and to show off what you've created."

And, as I nervously put out my Victoria sponge to 'show off' what I had created in my misbehaving oven, people eagerly tucked in. So it seems even a total baking novice like me can join and have a lovely evening of fun. Not to mention the tasty plateful of leftover goodies everyone gets to take home.

So it really is as simple as it sounds: you bake a cake, eat cake and talk about cake. Yum.



For more information about the club and how to get involved, visit www.clandestinecakeclub.co.uk/groups/cambridge



A regular member of the *Charterhouse Cake Club*, the journal's tea and cake contributor, Miss Sue Day shares her very baking-friendly recipe for the Apple Pie Sponges.

For the cake:

- 200g caster sugar
- 200g softened butter
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 200g self-raising flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

For the filling:

- 120g butter, softened
- 120g icing sugar, sifted
- 1-2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 340g jar good-quality apple jam or pie filling

- Icing sugar to dust
- Cocktail umbrellas

Heat the oven to 190°C/fan 170°C/Gas Mark 5. Butter two 20cm sandwich tins and line with non-stick baking paper. In a large bowl, beat all the cake ingredients together until you have a smooth, soft batter.

- 2 Divide the mixture between the tins, smooth the surface with a spatula or the back of a spoon, then bake for approximately 20 minutes until golden and the cake springs back when pressed. Turn onto a cooling rack and leave to cool completely.



- 3 - To make the filling, beat the butter until smooth and creamy, then gradually beat in the icing sugar. Beat in ground cinnamon to flavour to your taste. Spread the buttercream over the bottom of one of the sponges, top it with the apple jam and sandwich the second sponge on top.

- 4 - Dust with a little icing sugar before serving and decorate with cocktail umbrellas.



Brush up your etiquette at 'Downton dinner'

DON your dinner jacket and learn to dine like they did at Downton on a course in Cambridge.

A thrower of trendy tea parties and an expert in etiquette are organising a dining workshop inspired by the ITV show *Downton Abbey*, which is based on the Earl of Grantham's family in the first half of the 20th century.

Miss Sue Flay, of The

Secluded Tea Party, and manners buff William Hanson are inviting guests to dress for dinner in readiness for a lesson in everything from which knife and fork to use to the difference between butler and silver service.

They are laying on a specially designed three-course dinner with drinks to match for the black tie occasion at Cambridge's Hotel du

Vin on Friday, March 8.

Miss Sue Flay - aka Jo Christy - said: "This etiquette event is going to be engaging our guests and encouraging them to make an effort with their fellow diners around the table. There are going to be a few surprises and such a buzz, I cannot wait."

Tickets cost £100 each. To book visit www.secludedteaparty.com.



TOP TABLE: A scene from Downton Abbey

Cambridge Evening News Feb '13

Dine Like Downton

The best of etiquette and the best of dishes



Louise Hanzlik

localsecrets.com Wednesday, 20 Feb 2013

Comment

Like Problem?

Downton Abbey is coming to Cambridge! On March 8th you can learn to Dine Like Downton at this etiquette event which is part of the Eat Cambridge festival.

We can't deny that etiquette is thought of as rather an out-dated value, but in some places maybe the world would be a more pleasant place if we all still behaved with the decorum and restraint of the early 20th century. The dinner table might be just such a place. So what actually happens at an etiquette event? And what made the event host decide we needed a lesson in dinner etiquette..? We caught up with Jo Christy, aka Miss Sue Flay from the Secluded Tea Party, to hear more about the event.



An etiquette event is a really original idea - but what exactly is it? Can you give us any hints as to what will actually take place?!

JC: All we will say is that there is a very varied guest list, with some hugely exciting attendees joining us. We have our very own Carson serving our main courses in the correct manner, and after-dinner shenanigans will follow, but I couldn't possibly tell you any more - you'll have to book your place to find out...!

So what do you personally think is the most important lesson in table manners?

JC: I used to think it was to not embarrass yourself when slurping on your soup as a guest; however, dining etiquette is in fact all about making your fellow guests feel welcomed and at ease. If they are rude in any way, the best form of etiquette is to not pick up on their faux pas but simply ignore them... or join them!

Where on Earth did you get the idea?

JC: William Hanson and I hosted an Afternoon Tea Etiquette event in September. He is the UK's leading etiquette expert, and we got chatting about a favourite subject of ours, Downton Abbey. We decided that a Downton event would be fantastic, and the idea grew out of what started off as a very amusing and geeky conversation. William blogs his thoughts on each episode, pointing out all the etiquette faux pas on the series, so it was a no-brainer that we would put it into practice.

Do you have to be a fan of Downton Abbey to attend the workshop?

JC: Absolutely not, it's all very British, with a tongue-in-cheek view on manners at the dinner table. William and I will play the roles of Lord and Lady, and we'll be coaching our guests - while they enjoy their three-course meal - on the correct way to eat, converse and enjoy the evening.

"Local Secrets" promotion Feb '13



CALLING ALL CAKE BAKERS

Find out more about the exciting new
Cambridge Bake Off competition, which
includes a TV series and a free
cookery magazine, *Cambridge*

Exquisite cakes, made to order
10 Amazing TV series on TV
Cookery guide for homebakers
Cambridge Cookery School
1 Free cookery magazine

The first prize is a year's supply of
Cambridge Cookery School, the
Cambridge OFF THE SHELF



There's a lot more to the
Cambridge Bake Off competition
than just the cakes
and the TV series

The Cambridge Bake Off competition
is a free cookery magazine, a
TV series, a cookery guide for
homebakers, a year's supply of
Cambridge Cookery School, the
Cambridge OFF THE SHELF

In conjunction with:

CAMBRIDGESHIRE
JOURNAL

CAMBRIDGE COOKERY SCHOOL
125 years
Cambridge News

TuckerGardner



Jo wears:

Sweetpea dress in Ivory/Violet by Phase Eight, £99

Knitted shrug in Purple by Phase Eight, £50

Embellished court in Black by Dune, £32 (sale price)

Large Shambhala faux pearl necklace by John Lewis, £22

Faux pearl bracelets by John Lewis, £5 (sale price)

Faux pearl screw-back earrings by Finesse, £12.50



John Lewis Makeover
with Journal Columnists
- March 2013.



THE
LOOK

Say it with flowers

Proof that floral prints never go out of fashion, floor-skimming evening skirts emblazoned with fat cabbage roses were a cornerstone of Dior's spring/summer catwalk show.

To keep the look current, don't go for dainty prints: instead of wild flower meadows, think herbaceous borders at the height of summer. Accessorise with equally timeless pearls.



Geranium Fit & Flare dress by Phase Eight, £130, John Lewis and Phase Eight, both Grand Arcade, Cambridge

Hermione floral pearl collar, £15, Accessorize, Cambridge, Peterborough and Bury St Edmunds

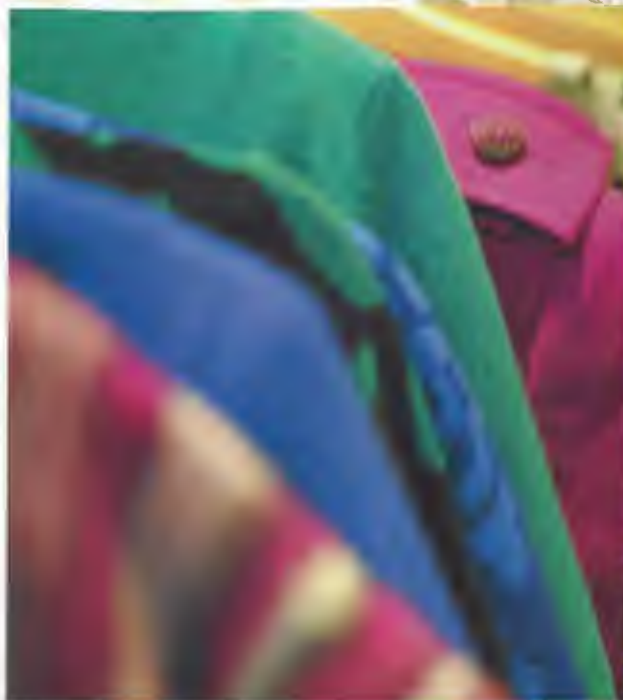
All made up

As Bobbi Brown's many devotees will know the beauty brand's focus is on 'helping women be their best'; it's all about creating a look that feels natural and brings out your best features.

The team at Cambridge's John Lewis store did the make-up for all our models, producing four different takes on spring/summer's feminine trend (turn to page 98 to find out more).

Because Jo loves all things retro, she decided to go for the boldest look of them all – making a feature of her eyes, with flicks of black kohl, and her lips, which were given a ruby red pout.

The John Lewis beauty department is offering free Perfect Pout workshops at every counter this spring – all you have to do is call 0844 693 1709 and make a reservation. Go on, pucker up.



“

This is a terrible thing to admit, but most of the time I wear what's comfy: trainers, leggings. . . When you're in the kitchen, you need to be comfortable.

Believe it or not, I was a goth at school. I had black hair, black clothes: it was black, black, black.

It wasn't until I launched The Secluded Tea Party, my pop-up tearoom, that I started to wear more colour. I created Miss Sue Flay, my alter-ego: she's very bubbly and outgoing and, obviously, wears a lot of floaty tea dresses.

I have to admit I was very nervous about putting myself in the hands of the John Lewis fashion advice ladies. In fact I was so nervous, I was shaking when I walked in.

I was bullied at school; the kids were so horrible to me. I lost a lot of confidence, became very self-conscious, and developed eating issues. I found it really hard to eat in front of other people and used to eat secretly.

Thanks to Miss Sue, and my lovely fiancé Duncan, that's all changing. I've got so much more confidence now and I've started to really enjoy clothes. I've recently lost three stone and I'm still slimming: I've done quite a bit of TV stuff now, and I want to be able to go on camera and feel good about myself.

→



ALL DRESSED UP

Known to Journal readers as Miss Sue Flay, the magazine's resident tea and cake expert, Jo Christy runs her own pop-up tearoom, etiquette workshops and one-on-one baking sessions. As you might expect, she has a penchant for tea dresses. Jo is 28 and lives in Cambourne with her fiancé



I can honestly say there is no way in hell I'd have worn a fitted dress like this before now, but I actually really like it. And I love the purple shrug and all the embellishments: the pearls and the headband have got that vintage feel, which I really like.

When it comes to make-up, I do put flicks on my eyes when I have the time – and I'm loving the red pout!

All in all, it's been an amazing experience. And, on the back of it I've been asked to be a plus-size model for a catwalk show! Who'd have believed it?

”

Ask the experts

"For me, looking good isn't actually about following fashion," says John Lewis fashion adviser Dorothy Wood. "It's about finding clothes to suit your shape, your lifestyle and your personality – and making the most of your natural assets."

Dorothy and her three colleagues at the Cambridge store – Dolly Bamrah, Denise Taylor and Natalie Hoyle – give free fashion advice by appointment. "I never say anything negative: it's all about making people look and feel their best," adds Dorothy. "But, equally clients can trust us to be honest; we're not on commission."

Shape, colour and practicality are, Dorothy continues, all key. "You could



spend £500 on a dress and still never wear it because the colour's not quite right. And your wardrobe has to work for your lifestyle."

Dorothy says this season's trends have a strikingly feminine feel. "You're going to see an awful lot of flowers again. In fact, there's a lot of pattern full stop: or prints have really come in

"In terms of the silhouette, pencil skirts and peplums are still prominent. And the fashion for statement jewellery continues too.

"One thing I've really noticed is the breadth of the colour palette, which is brilliant: there's something out there to suit everybody."

✦ To make a free appointment with the fashion advice team at John Lewis, Grand Arcade, Cambridge, call 01223 22464

Miss Sue Flay

moo.com

Miss Sue Flay
Baking Teacher, Etiquette Enthusiast
& Afternoon Tea Aficionado

e. hello@misssueflay.com
w. misssueflay.com

LEARN A LESSON

Miss Sue Flay has teamed up with etiquette guru William Hanson to run a pair of dining workshops in Cambridge this spring.

The first, **Dine Like Downton**, will include an etiquette lesson and **three-course black tie dinner**, hosted by your own **Lord and Lady Grantham**, at Hotel du Vin in the city. Taking place on the evening of Friday, March 8th, tickets to the event cost £100.

The second workshop, **Afternoon Tea Etiquette**, is called a 'finishing school for afternoon tea' and will involve **bell-and-whistles tea** with a talk on top-notch table manners. Also being held at Hotel du Vin, this time on the afternoon of Saturday, April 6th, tickets to the tea workshop cost £50.

+ Tickets to both events are selling fast. To book, visit <http://www.wegotickets.com/secludedteaparty>

Hotel
du Vin
& Bistro

Miss Sue Flay

You can find out more about Miss Sue Flay – otherwise known as Jo Christy – in this month's Fashion and Beauty section, where she can be seen modelling some of this season's most ladylike trends. Turn to page 90.

Miss Sue Flay

Miss Sue Flay

Miss Sue Flay

Miss Sue Flay

Miss Sue Flay

The art of AFTERNOON TEA

About to host two workshops on the art of dining – alongside acclaimed etiquette expert William Hanson – Miss Sue Flay, Journal tea and cake correspondent, tells us how to eat and drink with elegance



With television programmes like *The Great British Bake Off* and *Downton Abbey* proving huge hits, it's clear that more and more people are becoming interested in both baking and dining traditions. As a result, they wish to know how to take tea in the traditional British way – and do so with sophistication.

I know that I'm not alone in tiring of the decline of moral standards and manners in today's society. This problem makes us cast our minds back to an earlier Britain, where being well-behaved in every social situation was expected.

Afternoon tea is an affordable experience and it allows us to indulge our sweet teeth. But, more than this, it lets us enjoy lovely surroundings and the company of friends.

There are many lessons to be learnt on the etiquette of afternoon tea – with the best lesson being that guests are not there to criticise one another, but to make each other feel relaxed and welcomed.

Here are my top five tips for taking tea in an elegant and intrinsically English style:



Elbows should not be present at the table, no matter how our parents acted during our younger years.

William has a saying that I adore: "All joints on the table must be carved." This should help you to remember!



You should never cut a scone with a knife, simply break it in two with your fingers. When you add a condiment to a scone you should first place it on the plate and then transfer it from your plate to your scone. You should never take a condiment from the jar and transfer straight to your treat.



Afternoon tea conversation should be light, steering clear of controversial subjects. It is considered rude to ask a fellow guest what they do for a living or to talk about money and personal matters.



Do you know the correct way to stir your tea? Yes, there is a proper way and it should be stirred backwards and forwards in a 6, 12, 6, 12 motion (imagining your tea cup is a clockface), not around in circles.



The correct way for a lady to leave the table is for her to not disclose where she is going. If returning, she should leave her napkin on her chair. If not returning, the napkin should be placed on her plate. The gentlemen of the table should stand until she has left the room.





Afternoon Tea

Etiquette with Miss Sue Flay

*Understand the importance of manners over our most beloved & most British tradition, Afternoon Tea
Book a private etiquette & mini history lesson with Afternoon Tea Hostess & Baking Tutor, Miss Sue Flay
Practice the art of conversation, eat cake, drink tea & spend time with your colleagues, friends or family
Hosted at a special table at Cambridge's John Lewis Brasserie or a private venue of your choice. £55 p.p.*

MissSueFlay.com

Hello@MissSueFlay.com

Available for 2-8 guests

7 days a week