

ladies' lunch

CAFE | lizzie corser

Drinking tea is one of our most lasting genteel traditions. We start young, playing with miniature tea sets, pouring the imaginary contents of plastic pots into little cups to serve to our dolls and teddy bears. And we continue to brew our Earl Greys and English Breakfasts to share a cuppa with friends well into our old age.

Morning and afternoon tea is more than a mere gastronomic undertaking; it's a whole experience – ceremonious and ritual even in its most informal fashion.

Having said that, experienced in its entirety, the art of high tea is a true delight and not a light endeavour. With this in mind, two girlfriends and I eagerly anticipated a lunch at High Societea in Clayfield for a truly decadent experience.

When it opened in May this year, the establishment quickly gained kudos, so we were curious to see how it fared after the honeymoon period.

Surrounded by foliage in a pleasant nook of a shopping cluster, High Societea's quaint air was immediately obvious. Groups of women were seated around tables swathed in fresh linen and sprayed with little clusters of fresh-cut garden roses. Each table was laid with a different antique china setting – collected over time by owner

Kathy Heath – and service staff, neatly dressed in black and white, whisked around the room.

We were positioned in the teahouse's adjoining second room and immediately taken care of with iced water.

The menu has many fine offerings in the way of sandwiches, salads, savoury tarts and quiches. These, we rapidly skimmed over to find the true reason for our being there – the Royal Ascot Tea.

The most indulgent of the high tea options (at \$25 per head), the Royal Ascot Tea includes a three-tiered stand of savouries, baked delights and sweets, as well as the most appropriate refresher for such an occasion, a Pimms cocktail.

These arrived first, in tall, ice-filled glasses, with the traditional garnish. We enjoyed them while soaking up the ambience and feeling rather refined.

We ordered our tea to arrive with the food. Faced with a rather extensive selection, I was a little lost, but with the aid of a very knowledgeable waiter I finally selected a pot of Traditional Afternoon (\$3.50), while my companions both chose Russian Caravan (\$3.50).

The whole purpose of our ladies' lunch was to develop our refined natures – evidently inherent



Sweet treats ... the Royal Ascot Tea, above, from High Societea at Clayfield, top right



high societea

Bonney Place, 318 Junction Rd, Clayfield. Ph: 3357 4299. Open 9am-4pm Monday-Saturday. Booking recommended. BYO. Credit card and Eftpos facilities. Wheelchair access.

rating: 9/10

food: high tea, sandwiches and light meals

wine: n/a

ambience: quaint, light-filled, formal surrounds

service: attentive, helpful and friendly

RATING GUIDE

1-4: woeful; 5: disappointing; 6: passable; 7: good; 8: very good; 9: excellent; 10: perfect

in our surrounding teahouse frequenters – but when the three-tiered stand of delights arrived, it was difficult to maintain polite restraint.

Little edible parcels were arranged like delicious gems, scattered with rose petals and topped with a chocolate plaque proclaiming the imperial status of our meal – and I do mean meal.

A selection of ribbon sandwiches, savoury tartlets, asparagus rolls and such were arranged on the bottom tier, while on the middle were little scones and pikelets (still warm) accompanied

by homemade jam and double cream. But we still made sure we left room for the contents of the top tier. Gorgeous homemade tarts, slices, cakes, and even a miniature berry cream dessert served in a shot-glass, all tasted as good as they looked.

Served in silver pots, with fine china and an antique cream and sugar set, our tea was the ideal accompaniment.

Our ladies' outing was truly satisfying, not only for the food, but also for the respectfully attentive service and charming atmosphere.



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