



PUT ON YOUR
Mad Hat

and come to tea!

THE CHIEF MAD HATTERS: Friends
Cynthia van Roden, OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT,
and Kim Golding, OPPOSITE TOP RIGHT,
cohosted an afternoon in Wonderland.



“There was a table set out
under a tree
 ...and the March Hare
 and the Hatter
 were having tea at it.”

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANE KORTRIGHT



PHOTOSTYLISTS: BETSY GANT-STEWART AND MARK MORTON

WHEN YOU WANT TO THROW A PARTY and your guest list is a mishmash of sixth-graders, sixtysomethings, single colleagues and pals from your kids' school, try taking a page from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. That's what Kim Golding did, with cohost Cynthia van Roden, when she created a mad tea party that was so topsy-turvy, it captivated everyone—with living-room chairs in the garden, a Cheshire cat grinning from a tree, drinks (some spiked!) served in tea cups, and hats so nonsensical that the Mad Hatter would have been proud.

“It created a kind of happy whirling-around feeling,” says

Kim, who had moved into a fixer-upper in Kansas City five years earlier and wanted to throw a big bash for friends now that it was party-perfect. “Everyone had fun,” she says.

For your own celebration, ask friends to arrive at the magical hour of 4 p.m. wearing the wackiest hats they can devise (no baseball caps allowed). Then follow some simple Wonderland rules—mix and match; vary scale so that big things are small, and vice versa; and use elaborate chairs, mirrors and your best silver outdoors—to turn your backyard into a world so fanciful that guests will feel they've fallen down the rabbit hole.



HAVE A SIT-DOWN (1) While the typical tea party tends to be an intimate gathering, when Alice comes upon the March Hare, the Dormouse and the Mad Hatter, they are clustered at the end of a long table set for a great many people. Place two lightweight plastic folding tables (72-inch-long tables from \$119 at homedepot.com) end to end and cover them with inexpensive white fabric or with sheets (just overlap by about three inches to avoid a gap). For seating, use a hodge-podge of your own and neighbors' wooden dining-room and kitchen chairs. Finally, put an Alice-worthy throne—a wing-backed living-room chair—at the head.

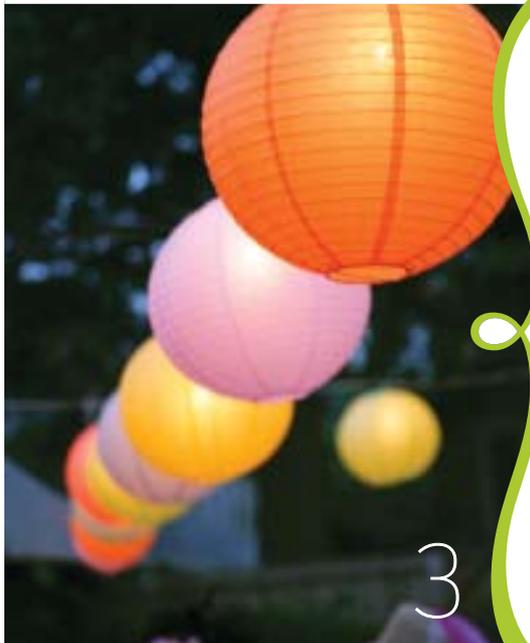
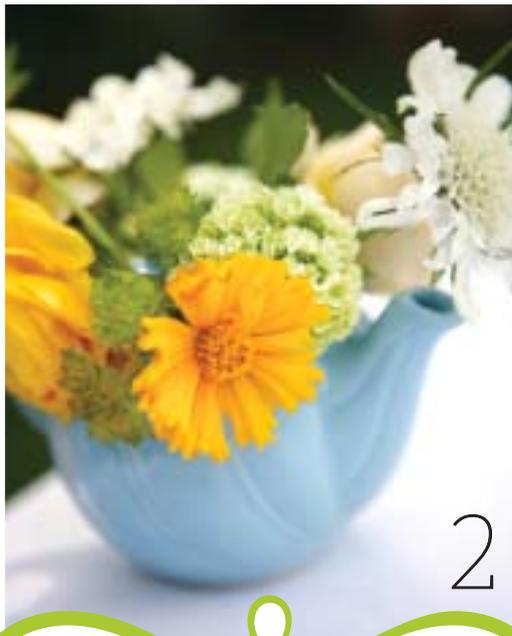
DRESS IT UP (1 & 2) Arrange two or three of your most elaborate silvery or crystal candelabras or candlesticks in a row down the center of the table for drama and height. Then scatter teeny tea lights in between to emphasize a shift in scale. For greenery, add a tall topiary or two (from the florist or garden store) and several short, full bunches of flowers in brightly painted terra-cotta pots or teapots. Flower arrangements should have an English-garden look, which means you should assemble an informal mix of sizes, colors and shapes. Just pick whatever's growing in your garden, or buy batches of inexpensive daisies, greens and small buds, like sweet

william, and mix and match them in short, full bunches. Add in a stem or two of something more dramatic, such as ranunculus, cabbage roses or peonies. Place a few of the little bouquets around the backyard as well as on tables.

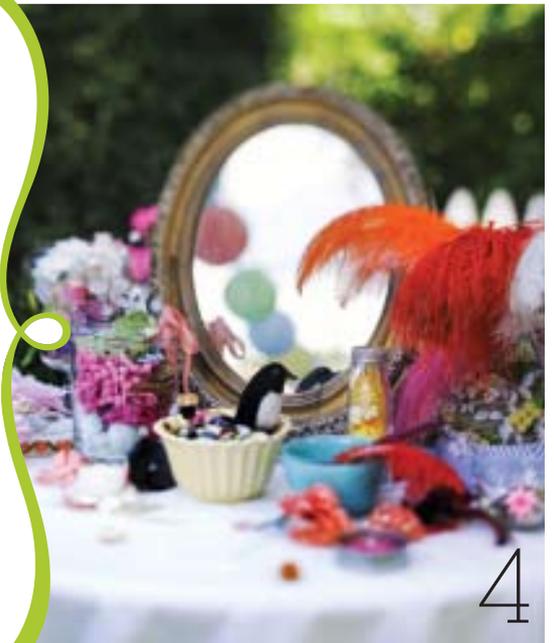
LIGHT THE NIGHT (3) You'll make instant magic with the right lighting. Start by stringing Chinese paper lanterns across your yard; they look like big balloons in daylight and give a magical glow when the sun sets. Just be sure to buy the sets (available at pearlriver.com) that come complete with a cord and lights. Then wrap strands of twinkle lights around the trunks of a few trees (use only those lights approved for outdoor use). At dusk, the tea candles on the table will cast a gentle glow.

CREATE A HAT-CRAFT TABLE (4) For those who arrive without a lid, or with one barely decorated, provide a station where they can do their mad-hatter thing. Unearth as many hats as you can find—any kind will do—from the attic or a thrift shop. Cover a table with a long, white tablecloth and place an ornate gilt-edged mirror in the center to mimic an elaborate dressing table. Pile on small containers of feathers, tiny birds and butterflies; bits of ribbon, buttons, fake fruit and flowers; and hat pins, playing cards and junk jewelry. Provide fast-drying tacky glue. (All available at any craft store.)

PUT YOUR STAMP ON IT (5) No need to buy expensive party supplies when you can decorate items you already own with a stamp inspired by the Mad Hatter's classic hat. **FREE DOWNLOAD:** Print or download the image from our Web site (hallmarkmagazine.com) and have it made into a rubber stamp at a local store or online (about \$26 at sites like thestampmaker.com). Buy stamp pads in several bright colors and stamp one image on your invitation, party bags, plates, napkins, balloons for your entryway—you name it. It's best to use white paper napkins and paper plates (not the plastic-coated kind) so the ink won't rub off.



““There is plenty of room!””
said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large armchair at one end of the table.”





“...you might just as well say that *I see what I eat* is the same thing as *I eat what I see.*”
—the Hatter



WHAT TO DRINK? (1 & 5) Well, tea, of course! Kim Golding brewed five iced “teas” (some spiked, some plain) and labeled them with witty tea tags: Curiouser Green Tea (green tea soda), Tweedle Dumb and Tweedle Tea (fresh mint and ginger), Drink Me Tea (lavender lemonade), Queen of Hearts Tea (pomegranate, prosecco and Red Zinger tea) and Nonsensical Tea (rum-spiked orange tea). Find the labels and recipes at hallmarkmagazine.com, or simply serve your own favorite punch or lemonade using the fun names but noting the real contents underneath. To make the labels, print the images, mount them on a piece of heavy construction paper, cut them out and punch a hole at the top. Cut a piece of kitchen string and tie one end to the label and the other to a fruit wedge, which will weight the string as if it were a real tea bag. Serve juice in teapots for the kids.

LITTLE SANDWICHES (2) Anything between two pieces of bread can become a tea sandwich if you observe two customs: Serve it crustless and cut it small enough to be eaten in two bites. Try to get thin-sliced, firm-textured bread if possible. Pick a Flavored Cream Cheese (see below) and spread it very lightly on the bread. It’s meant to be a delicate backdrop to the filling. Top the cream cheese with your choice of very thinly sliced roast beef, smoked salmon, Black Forest ham, smoked turkey, cucumbers, radishes, watercress, water chestnuts or roasted peppers.

FLAVORED CREAM CHEESE

- 1 package (8 ounces) cream cheese, at room temperature
- 3 tablespoons Flavoring (see below)
- 2–3 tablespoons milk, water or apple juice

FLAVORINGS

- Minced scallions, cilantro, basil, dill, mint or chives
- Diced sun-dried tomatoes, raisins or kalamata olives
- Chopped chutney
- Well-drained pickle relish, horseradish, capers or chopped, mild green chilies

Use a fork to break up the cream cheese a bit. Sprinkle with your choice of flavoring and mash in. Beat until it reaches a good spreading consistency. Add milk, water or apple juice if necessary to loosen it up.

MAKE A BAKERY STOP (3) Instead of spending hours in the kitchen, head to your local bakery for petits fours, scones,



tarts, madeleines, or whatever else catches your fancy. Then pick up plums, bunches of grapes and lots of strawberries and cherries—all of which are in season and will be the perfect embellishment for big plates of sweet tea treats.

PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT (4)

Nothing screams Wonderland like a King or Queen of Hearts, so have a deck of them on hand—to eat! You can have cookies frosted at a local bakery, or splurge on photo cookies (sugar cookies that have a design printed on them) online at a site like rollingpinproductions.com for about \$4 per cookie. You can also pick up a set of cookie cutters in heart, club, spade and diamond shapes (available at cookiesinseattle.com) and use them to cut your sandwiches or make a big batch of sugar cookies.

SERVE IT PRETTY (5) Don’t buy plastic cups and serving pieces at a party supplier—just scour the local secondhand store for mismatched teacups and saucers (often as low as 25 cents), cake stands of all sizes and teapots. Then use them to hold everything from drinks to sandwiches to tea treats. Stack the mismatched cake stands one on top of the other and pile them high with sandwiches, cookies and fruit, each different item on its own layer, to create a topsy-turvy look. Use the teapots to pass drinks around the table (and as vases for flowers) and the cups for drinks and condiments (and to hold tea lights). □

FREE DOWNLOADS!

Find the recipes, tea labels and stamp design at www.hallmarkmagazine.com.