AFTERNOON TEA PARTY

CREATE AN OASIS OF CIVILITY AND HEALTH WITH THIS FESTIVE LUNCHEON MENU.

by Patti Verbanas
photography by Courtney Winston

Want to entertain in a health-conscious, sophisticated fashion? Consider canapés. "People enjoy choosing lots of little things, and when you eat smaller tastes of food, it leaves you feeling more satisfied," says Shari Bilt Boockvar, a registered dietitian in Livingston. "You end up eating less in the long run because what you eat is portion-controlled."

Certainly, there is an element of excitement in approaching a delicate luncheon buffet set upon a gracefully designed tabletop. *New Jersey Life Health + Beauty* commissioned caterer Chris Casey & Company of Clifton and Bucks County event designer Rusty Thomas to create an American version of an English Afternoon Tea that will give you a fine excuse to savor time with your friends in a healthy way. "Tea sandwiches make an elegant presentation, offer a nice variety, and take away from the heaviness of a standard sandwich platter," Casey explains. Since they are more of an afternoon snack, Casey added items such as angel hair pasta salad with smoked tuna "Niçoise," an artisanal cheese platter, and grilled asparagus salad to create a more substantial luncheon. The key to this menu, she advises, is to keep everything "tempting and light."

Boockvar recommends serving white tea, which is the highest in antioxidents and is the least processed of teas, or green tea. Her picks: Republic of Tea White Tea and Bigelow's Chai Green Tea.

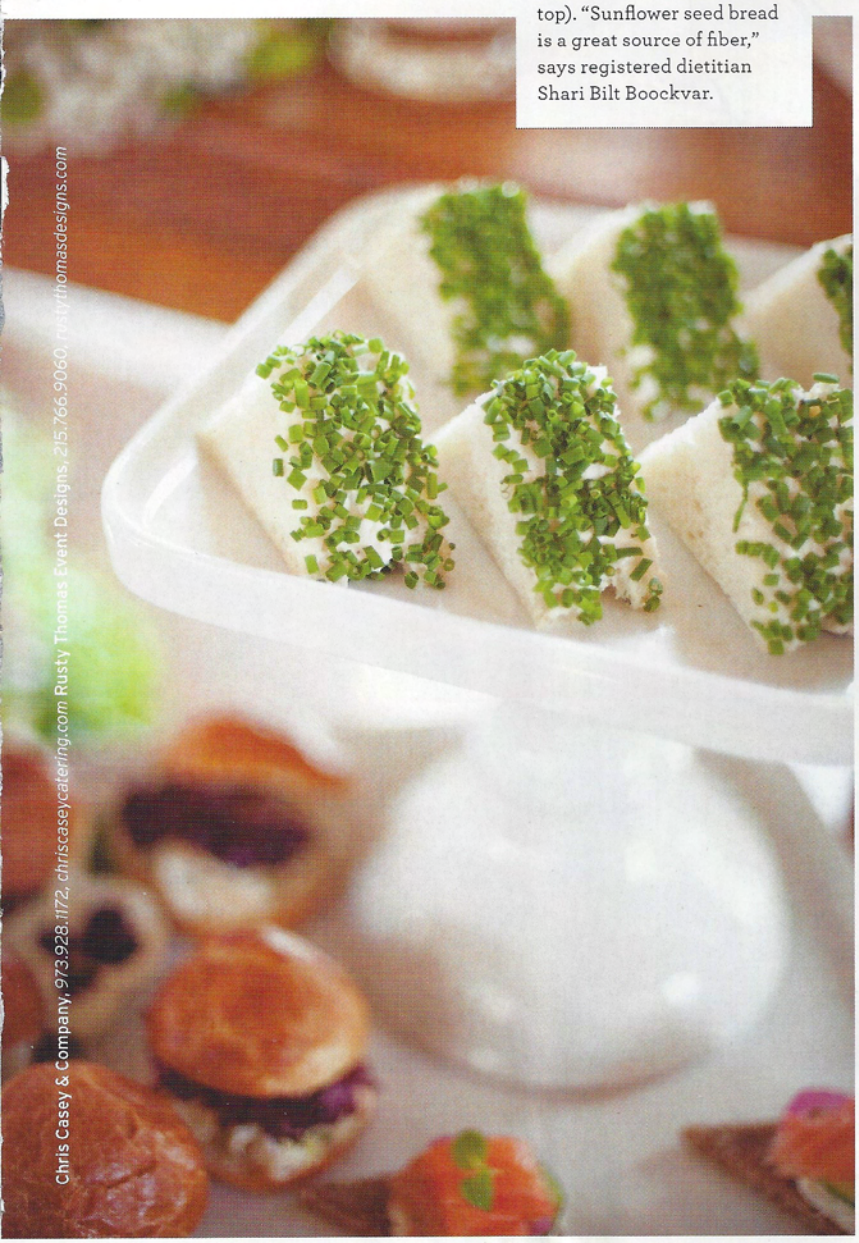
"Delicate" best describes Thomas' vision for his Zen-like tabletop design. "Scale is important," he says. "We wanted something simple, but in mass — to take a lot of a certain element and just go with it." Here, that element is freshly clipped pear branches coupled with string smilax and Delphinium tips in a variety of arrangements. When deciding upon design, he advises, consider the menu first. "The design shouldn't fight the food," he says. "It should enhance it."

Deviled quail eggs with truffle caviar "nested" on Affilla Cress. Grilled shrimp and avocado salad on button brioche rolls (below). Visit NJLHealthandBeauty.com for full menu and recipes.

"Tea sandwiches and salads allow you to choose lighter foods — and more of them — because the portions are smaller."

—SHARI BILT BOOCKVAR, R.D.

Minted chicken sandwiches with chive garnish (below) and smoked salmon on sunflower seed bread (center, top). "Sunflower seed bread is a great source of fiber," says registered dietitian Shari Bilt Boockvar.



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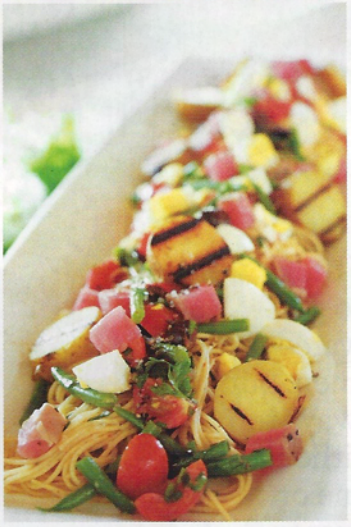

Rusty Thomas employed freshly clipped pear branches (coupled with Delphinium tips in the smaller arrangements) because their "undulating curviness helped to soften the room."

Angel hair pasta salad with smoked tuna "Niçoise" (center) has all the ingredients of a traditional tuna Niçoise, but Chris Casey served it over angel hair pasta for a different presentation. Petite oat and currant scones with roasted almond and date nut spread (center, bottom) are only about two inches in diameter.

Executive Chef Tom Patterson used edible micro herbs, buds, and salad greens to pop the dishes' presentation. "The Bloody Mary tomatoes with Jonah crab salad shooters is a nice low-carbohydrate option," says Boockvar. "It's a great way to get lycopene."