

RiverBender Blog: A Tea Party Brews Community

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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A few months ago, a friend of mine decided to throw a tea party.

It had been over a decade since the last tea party I attended. Remember being a little kid and serving tea (air) to your stuffed animals? This is a game I always loved, and now my friend was suggesting an adult version complete with sandwiches, pastries and maybe a little amaretto splashed in the teacups. I was all in.

The tea parties quickly became a weekly — and intense — affair. My friend is a chronic antiquer and so has several dishes, tablecloths and vases tucked in cardboard boxes in his basement. Every Monday night, we gather around his kitchen table and drink pot after pot of tea. We listen to scratchy Broadway records on a turntable and split sandwiches.

This might sound sort of sophisticated, or at least, a young person's attempt at sophistication. But at the end of the day, it's just a bunch of friends hanging out and sharing a meal, and that's all it needs to be. It's a chance to come together and catch up, once a week, every week, with people I care a lot about.

We chat about everything mundane in our lives and gossip about old flames and also sometimes veer into very serious, quiet conversations about loneliness or political strife or desperation. This is the beauty of these evenings, even if they leave me sleep-deprived on Tuesday mornings.

We are an increasingly isolated society. Plus, as 20-somethings who are still feeling out our first full-time jobs, serious relationships, graduate programs or whatever else, it's easy to let some of these friendships fall away. We get busier and people grow further from the personalities that first drew us together all those years ago.

But still, every week, we brew a pot of tea and gather around the kitchen table. It's an intentional decision every Monday to come together and share our lives.

In a lot of ways, isolation is often the safer option, the simpler option. Deciding to “do life” with other people requires you to choose them, time after time. Community is complicated to form and difficult to sustain.

But I'm fortunate enough to have these people in my life, so I will continue to choose them, even on nights when I'm tired or stressed or just ready to be home. When I see us all sitting around the table, navigating the world as a little unit, it's worth it. Some of the terrifying parts of life seem a bit more manageable when I have my team of old and new friends backing me up.

If you're lucky enough to have this, recognize how precious it is. And for those people who maybe have a few less teammates than they'd like, keep looking. Your team is out there and waiting for you to find them. It's worth the search.