



Taking Time for Afternoon Tea at Borsari Gallery

by Nicola Burnell

When I received a gift certificate for Afternoon Tea at the Village Tea Room at Borsari Gallery I was absolutely thrilled to learn that a Tea Room had just opened up on Route 6A, in Dennis. For an English woman who begins every day with tea served in Royal Albert fine bone china, this was the perfect gift.

The tradition of serving Afternoon Tea dates back to the 1800's, when the Duchess of Bedford began inviting friends to join her for tea and light snacks to tide them over until suppertime. What was once a very British event is now gaining popularity in the United States.

Our Afternoon Tea couldn't come soon enough for me. Anxious to see if this was "the real thing," my friends and I met at the Borsari Gallery within the week. It was only as I walked through the door that I realized this was a formal art gallery, not the quaint little store run by old ladies which I was used to in England.

Gallery owners Kathy and Bob Borsari make a point of trying to greet every guest at the door. The gallery is the result of two years of extensive renovations to a barn which dates back to the 1800's. Vaulted wooden ceilings, original beams and walls and beautifully restored wooden floors create a sense of timelessness that invites the imagination to surrender to the soft music, perfect lighting and artwork.

Kathy explained that she and Bob had returned to Cape Cod, where they'd met twenty-four years earlier, to take care of her ailing mother. They had previously owned a vineyard in San Francisco, producing Pinot Noir and Merlot wines. Prior to that they lived in Los Angeles, Philadelphia and Washington D.C.

Their lives were busy, creative and fulfilling. When they made the decision to move back to Cape Cod they had no idea what kind of future awaited them. Kathy was sure, however, that she and Bob would find something that fed their desire to explore new creative options.

The Borsaris were ready to find a new home and discovered the barn on the first day they began searching for property. "The rest is history," Kathy says. "We took one look and it was as if a shade went up and we saw all of what this beautiful historic building could be."

Featuring the work of David Grose and Frank H. Wagner, the gallery also features artwork by Kathy's brother-in-law and former gallery owner, Andrew Borsari. This combination of still life, landscapes, seascapes and lighthouses creates a unique atmosphere for a Tea Room.

The idea to add the Village Tea Room to the Borsari Gallery was suggested by their friend, George Davidson, who immediately recognized the potential for such a venture in Dennis. A true Scottish gentleman, George knows how to treat a customer like royalty.

With years of experience managing the Highclere Hotel in Ascot and the Epsom Downs Hotel in Epsom, England, and the Royal Hotel in Portobello, Edinburgh, he is no stranger to the subtle nuances necessary to create an authentic Tea Room atmosphere.

Despite its name, Afternoon Tea is about so much more than just the tea in the teapot. Not to be confused with "High Tea," which involves serving a full meal, Afternoon Tea is a delicate balance of finger food, cakes and scones. The Village Tea Room also serves Lunch Specials, featuring homemade soups served in large latte cups and special sandwiches of the day.

The tables scattered throughout the gallery are adorned with cloth napkins, seasonal flowers, full tea sets and dessert plates, sugar bowls filled with sugar cubes and pedestal servers. George, who loves to chat with his patrons, says he spent last summer hunting for dishes in the local thrift shops and antique stores.

His eclectic selection of mix and match china give each table its own personality. Our table was laid with Shelley and Queen Anne china from England, German Imperial China and a creamer from George's own mother.



Fine Bone China at the Borsari Gallery Village Tea Room

There is a good selection of Twinings Tea on the menu. While I prefer the traditional English Afternoon black tea (with milk, of course), Jasmine Green Tea, Prince of Wales and Lady Grey Tea are among the other offerings.

The Afternoon Tea includes a variety of crustless finger sandwiches, cut into delicate triangles, arranged on the bottom layer of a pedestal server. Our selection was comprised of cucumber on white, turkey and cranberry on wheat, ham and cheese on white and egg on wheat.



The top layer of the server held an assortment of small dessert cakes. While these are delicious, make sure you leave room for your scone, because there really is nothing quite like an authentically prepared English scone.

The scones served at Borsari come from MacKillop's Bakery, and are so good they crumble to the touch. They're served with a dollop of authentic Devonshire clotted cream, imported from England. For the uninitiated, preparing a scone for consumption can be an art.

Start by cutting the scone into two halves, then spread a thin layer of preserve over each half. If you're like me, you'll then smother the scone in clotted cream until you can't see any preserve beneath it.

More polite patrons may spoon a sparing amount of cream into the center of the scone and nibble at it, like a mouse. I admit that I enjoy this particular treat far too much to ever skimp on the cream.



The success of the Village Tea Room has meant that Kathy and Bob Borsari have been able to keep their gallery doors open year round.

Kathy is quick to recognize the importance of her local cliental. "We have been blessed by them and want to do our utmost to further our relationship with them," she says. "We are busy in the winter on Cape Cod because of their patronage."

Despite a grueling work schedule and caring for her mother, Kathy and her husband are thrilled to be able to utilize their collective business skills under one roof. The gallery benefits from the guests who frequent the Village Tea Room, while offering a charming location for a real treat.

The Borsari's are now building up another aspect to their business: the gallery is proving to be the perfect venue for events like weddings, rehearsals, showers and birthday celebrations.

For Kathy, who thought she was returning to the Cape for sad reasons, the illness of her mother has brought forth unexpected gifts and opportunities. For locals like me, it has brought one of my all time favorite play dates: Afternoon Tea with my friends, in a place that both inspires the mind and nourishes the soul.

VILLAGE TEA ROOM

AT BORSARI GALLERY



Monday - Friday 11:00 - 4:00
Sunday 12:00 - 5:00
524 Main Street (Route 6A)
Dennis Village, MA 02638
(508) 385 3434

RESERVATIONS WELCOMED
BUT NOT NECESSARY

Kathy@BorsariGalleryCapeCod.com
www.borsarigallerycapecod.com
Gift Certificates Available



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Nicola teaches Reiki, Personal Empowerment workshops, novel writing & creativity development classes. She also works as a personal and professional consultant.

Nicola is a member in Letters of the National League of American Pen Women and an active participant in the Cape Cod Time Bank.

She lives in Harwich with her two teenage sons and several pets.