

MUD-PIE TEA PARTY



GLORIOUS MUD! It's the essential fine-dining ingredient in a mud-pie kitchen. Hosting an afternoon tea party in your garden offers lots of opportunity for sensory play, teamwork, language development, reading, writing, counting, and wonderful imaginary play.

MATERIALS

- Range of sensory materials such as mud, water, sand, leaves, flowers and petals, herbs, and berries
- Selection of pots, pans, plates, teacups, and teapots
- Cookie cutters and cupcake liners
- Doilies and cake stands
- Picnic blanket or table and chairs
- Bunting, if you really want to set the scene
- Friends or toys to join in the banquet

What delights could you serve your guests at an afternoon tea party in your garden? Mud cakes, flower cookies, dainty sandwiches made from leaves. With a role-play activity such as this one, I like to think of the adults as facilitators rather than direct participants. Our role is to offer the materials as an invitation to play and then to step back and let the children take over. Give them space and time to imagine and create. Yes, accept cups of tea and slices of mud cake if offered, but be mindful of letting the children own the game and take the lead in the way it develops. As they play, you'll notice the games are full of learning.

- They'll try out new language and develop conversation skills as they chat, take orders, request ingredients, and serve guests.
- Notice how math weaves into the play as they make sure every person has a teacup, as they count out cookies onto a plate, as they match up the right-colored cups with saucers.
- Observe how they work on fine-motor skills as they pick leaves and petals to decorate their cakes or write down the menu on a chalkboard.
- They're also working with science as they concoct food from mud, sand, and water, experimenting with different substances and learning how materials combine and change states.
- They also get to develop relationships with others, enjoying fun times together and working as a team to organize the party and take on different roles in the play.