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All We Can Eat

The Food section serves up recipe tips, food trends and more.



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All We Can Eat is a meeting place for the food-obsessed, a traffic signal at the ever-crowded intersection of politics, culture, aesthetics, desire and the dinner plate.

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Chai high

By Bonnie S. Benwick



A good tea masala and triple boiling makes this a chai to remember. (Photos by Bonnie S. Benwick and Hush Supper Club)

Although I am a committed tea drinker, I had never met a cup of chai I could cozy up to until I had the good stuff at a Washington underground dinner over the summer. Coffee-shop attempts were grainy and wan-tasting. It's the preferred morning beverage in Gujarati, India, but is enjoyed at afternoon teatime and at bedtime as well.

[Hush Supper Club](#) founder Geeta serves a mugful of aromatherapy that happens to taste divine. She recently showed me how to make it, and so I share the recipe and process with you.

It starts with assamese tea, which smells a little like rye bread and is available at most Indian stores. The crucial ingredient seems to be the tea masala you use. Store-bought brands are handy, but Geeta uses her mother's special blend. (Go Mom.) The usual mixture contains cinnamon, cardamom, black pepper and clove; her mother's is darker, perhaps, due to an extra dose of the latter. When compared side by side, the store-bought masala was slightly more acidic and heavy on the cardamom.

A triple-boil process ensures a rich, caramel color and a balance of the fresh flavors of ginger and mint. In about 10 minutes, a creamy cuppa can be yours.

[Geeta's Chai](#)

1 generous serving

To avoid a stovetop mess, make sure you use at least a medium-size saucepan with high walls; the mixture needs to boil up three times.

1 cup water

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- 1/8 teaspoon freshly grated ginger root
- 1/4 heaping ~~tablespoon~~ teaspoon tea masala (spice blend)
- 2 teaspoons loose assamese tea
- 10 to 12 fresh mint leaves
- 3/4 cup whole or low-fat milk (do not use nonfat, as it will scald)
- 2 to 3 teaspoons sugar

Combine the water, ginger, tea masala, loose tea and mint leaves in a medium saucepan over high heat. Bring to a rolling boil, then add the milk. Let the mixture return to a boil and almost boil over; do not stir. Then reduce the heat to medium-low and cook for 30 seconds, undisturbed, then increase the heat to high and let it come to a full boil again, being careful not to let the mixture boil over.

Reduce the heat to medium-low, stir, then cover and cook for 30 seconds. Increase the heat to high and repeat the process two more times: boil (without boiling over), reduce the heat, cover and cook for 30 seconds.

Reduce the heat to low, cook, covered, for 2 minutes, the uncover and stir in the sugar to taste.

Pour through a fine-mesh strainer into a large mug. Serve piping hot.

Per serving (using low-fat milk): 140 calories, 7 g protein, 20 g carbohydrates, 4 g fat, 3 g saturated fat, 15 mg cholesterol, 110 mg sodium, 0 g dietary fiber, 8 g sugar

By Bonnie S. Benwick | November 5, 2010; 2:00 PM ET
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What in the world is 1/4 of a heaping tablespoon? It would seem that the amount of tea in the mixture would be crucial to success with this recipe. Maybe providing accurate measurements would be a good idea?

Posted by: margaret6 | November 8, 2010 10:05 AM | [Report abuse](#)

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