

“It is absolute nonsense to spend the special occasions in one’s life without the golden cup of tea.”

SOUMIA MALEK, *Bordj bou Arreridj, Algeria*



Tea Time

WELCOME TO A NEW TYPE OF *FORUM* ARTICLE. In the past, the non-academic articles on topics of global interest (for example, bicycles last July) or Americana (Texas last October) were researched and written by members of the *Forum* staff. In this issue our general interest topic is tea, the world’s most popular drink. The stories, descriptions, recipes, and poems that you are about to read were contributed by our readers in response to the tea survey announced in the April and July issues last year.

While reading all of the responses and choosing which ones to include here, we noticed that many of them mentioned childhood, family, friends, guests, customs, and culture. The similarity tells us that for many people having tea is a social occasion. There were other responses, however, that highlighted the pleasure of contentedly sitting alone and having some tea. Although there is a tremendous amount of variation in types of tea, ways of preparing it, and times to enjoy it, we can all agree that tea is a splendid drink.

Malgorzata Klimbej of Bydgoszcz, Poland, sums up why we wanted to devote an issue to this magic brew: “Tea can make us more patient and calm, and it can give us energy and inspiration. When I have some time to relax, a cup of tea is an indispensable part of it. I sit in my armchair, pour a cup of tea, and feel that life is really beautiful.”

Now, let’s hear from *Forum* readers around the world about their favorite drink!

Above

A piping hot cup of tea symbolizes hospitality and friendship to many people around the world.

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Opposite page

A Tamil tea-picker inspects harvested tea leaves at the Melfort Tea Estate in Sri Lanka.

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The Divine Beverage

GAZI ABDULLA HEL BAQUI
Khulna, Bangladesh

The garden of divine herb, monotonously leafy
Stimulates mind, heart and nerves,
Nay, how does this gift of Nature
Calm the senses of the civilized living?
It glorifies all festivities more enchantingly
Than a garden of charming flowers.
Drinking of this universal beverage
Makes one forget the miseries of the world.

The drinking of tea entails art and etiquette,
The uniform appearance of its liquor
Is black or green, light or heavy, dusty or rolled,
Where taste is brisk or soft, sweet or flavory.
Tea is for a traveler's energy, an idler's desire,
A vagabond's brief oblivion of self and society,
A worker's vigor where many others love and repose,
A poet's transportation to the world of imagination,
But a politician's need when mind is stormed
For hundreds of decisions and indecisions;
Signals of war and peace emerge out of a cup of tea.

Sipping of tea in a company reminds of teism,
Brings harmony, celebrating aristocracy of aroma,
What an artistic view the spot provides
Pointing to aestheticism of cup, color and taste!
There fragrant time stirs human faculties.
A cup of tea is the divine elixir for a solitary soul
Whose days cannot go without this worship of beauty.

Tea has its own honorable antiquity,
Ceremonial rites and norms it ensures,
'Tea-break' is momentous and 'bed-tea' is delightful,
The whole world is discussed over a savory cup of tea.
Perennial tea inculcates in all a sense of humanity
Through the wise but rough paths of civilizations
Where people profess tea-culture as their identity;
Its popularity is eclipsed by no other drink,
Man is born for tea, tea is born for man, indeed.

ALEKSANDRA RÓŻYCKA
Katowice, Poland

Tea has been present in Polish drawing rooms, kitchens, and living rooms for several centuries. During the socialist regime, shelves in grocers' shops were filled with boxes and packs of tea of unknown origin. Labels were written in Polish and said, "Packed in Poland." At the end of that epoch, shops contained more shoppers than goods! The lucky customer took any tea of any quality, usually low, that happened to be in the shop. After 1989 the time for tea grew better. The number of kinds of tea increased; their labels were foreign and colourful, promising new tastes. Though prices were high, people paid because the type of tea a guest was served was evidence of the social position of the host. At the same time, shops selling only tea and tea equipment came into existence. They were similar to a temple because of their very peculiar scent. Now a row of foreign tea boxes does not surprise anyone; they are part of the landscape of the grocery. Most of the information on the boxes is written in English, and it says the tea is from Asian countries. The passage from the socialist system to democracy was accompanied by changes in the attitudes towards imported tea in the Polish market.

ANDREA CALEFFI
Porto Alegre, Brazil

A Joke about Tea

In Rio Grande do Sul, the southernmost state of Brazil, the typical character is the *gaúcho*, or cowboy, which is also the nickname for natives of the region. The *gaúcho's* companion on cold nights is the indigenous green tea *yerba mate*, also called *chimarrão*. It is served in a dried gourd and drunk with a metal straw. Here is a joke told about a humble *gaúcho* on his first visit away from his home state. Dressed up in his leather boots, wide pants, and white shirt, with a red scarf around his neck, a *gaúcho* eagerly boarded the airplane for a much anticipated trip to the big city of Rio de Janeiro. Some *cariocas*, that is, natives of Rio, heard of the *gaúcho's* trip and decided to play a trick on him and give him a "warm welcome." A cheerful crowd waited for him at the airport. As soon as the bewildered cowboy arrived, he was given a *chimarrão*. The water used to prepare it, however, was so hot that it would bring tears to the eyes of even the most accustomed *chimarrão* drinker. It was absolutely boiling! The happy and amazed *gaúcho*, feeling humbly honored by the reception, took the drink from a grinning *carioca* and sucked it down. The burning tea filled his mouth. The poor man's face got red and tears streamed down his face. Looking amused and victorious, the *carioca* asked him, "Man, was that too hot for you?" Unbeaten, the *gaúcho* answered, "No, my friend, it's just that I already miss my home."

GULCHEHRA MAHKAMBAEVA

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

The Uzbek tea ceremony is almost an art and considered an important part of national etiquette. Even though the climate is hot and dry in Uzbekistan, we do not drink cold drinks or use ice cubes. Tea usually is served before and after the meal; both black and green tea are popular. Traditional Uzbek teapots and cups are beautifully decorated with designs of cotton plants or other national ornaments. Visiting is essential to Uzbek social life and friends may drop in any time of day. *Chai* (tea) is always served first, usually along with some traditional snack, such as bread, fruits, and nuts. The hostess brings the teapot to the table and pours one *piala* (bowl). She ceremonially pours it back and repeats this process two more times. According to Uzbek tradition these three rounds signify mud, butter, and tea. The hostess then serves the first cup to the eldest person at the table, pouring it into the bowls with the right hand and gently supporting the right elbow with the left hand. It is considered rude to pour a full cup of tea, as this means the hosts wish the guests would leave. As a rule guests do not ask for another cup of tea themselves. Tradition dictates that a good hostess must be very attentive to her visitors repeatedly encouraging them to drink more.

FLORA F. CABLING

Olongapo City, Philippines

Ginger tea is *salabat* in the Filipino language. The word evokes memories of cold December nights, churchyards full of people spiritually refreshed after coming from a pre-Christmas mass, and rice cakes golden or purple from makeshift clay ovens eaten piping hot. What a simple way to make this tasty brew: boil a kettleful of water with a length of ginger root and sweeten with brown sugar, or better, with the reddish sugar cake boiled down from cane juice. Flavorful pandan leaves add a welcome spike to the tea. Drink it hot to wash down the rice cake! Ginger tea not only gives a welcome warmth on cold nights, it also soothes a singer's voice and has a palliative effect on a speaker who has to give a lengthy speech. Like any other tea, *salabat* answers the need of a solitary drinker as well as the fellowship of a convivial group.

TRACY BLUES

Cape Town, South Africa

In South Africa, we have an indigenous red tea known as *rooibos*, from the Afrikaans word for red bush, which grows on the slopes of the Cedarberg mountains of the Western Cape region. Just like other teas, rooibos is available in teabags or loose leaves that are brewed with boiling water. Rooibos is refreshing as a hot beverage taken with milk and sugar or with lemon juice. It is naturally free of caffeine, so it

is used in drinks for children. Its distinctive fresh flavour also makes it a common ingredient of iced tea. Rooibos has medicinal properties, including curing sleeplessness, calming nervous tension, and easing skin irritations. Rooibos is also known as Khoisan tea because it was originally used by the Khoisan people, also known as the Bushmen.

ARGYRIOS K. ZYMARAS

Thessaloniki, Greece

Greece has been divinely endowed with a rich abundance of flora species that offer a variety of beverages, but one outclasses them all: mountain tea. As suggested by its name, mountain tea grows wild in the clear air and bright sun of the mountains, usually in rocky areas. Harvesting is a laborious task due to the region where it grows. It is usually dried so as to last through the winter. Mountain tea is served either at breakfast or as a light evening supper before going to bed, often with black olives and feta cheese. It is also given to sick people because it is light and invigorating. Mountain tea is God's blessing to all who enjoy Greek hospitality.

MACARENA RODULFO LAVILLA

Madrid, Spain

In my country, very few people drink tea. Coffee is the drink that rules. When I was a child, I never saw my parents drink tea. However, there was a small tin of tea just in case we fell ill and needed some, as that's what tea was meant for, to be drunk when we were ill. Against all odds, I grew to love tea, but my respect toward the infusion prevents me from drinking it far from home. Dare ask for a cup of tea in a Spanish bar and you'll be exposed to undrinkable concoctions, from tasteless cups made from bags kept in the fresh air for months, to tea with milk, literally, prepared with milk without any water. The same waiters who master a thousand ways to serve coffee can't be bothered to prepare a simple cup of tea. Why should they? It's coffee that runs in Spanish people's veins. Beloved cup of tea, my quest for you is seldom rewarded, but on such rare occasions I am comforted and soothed by your unsurpassed quenching powers!

SUSANA TURCIOS

San Miguel, El Salvador

I drink all kinds of tea, but my favorite is yerba mate (*Ilex paraguayensis*), which is very popular in Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and southern Brazil. It is a tradition of gauchos and part of their culture. To fix a good mate tea, you put the yerba in a special container also called a mate, which is a small emptied and dried gourd. You add hot water, and then you suck the tea through a bombilla, which is like a straw but made of metal. Besides being a good tea, there is a "lan-

guage” of yerba mate with social meaning. If you serve mate with a little orange peel you are telling someone that he is welcome. A little mint in the yerba may encourage a male friend to become a boyfriend. If you serve someone mate *lavado*, that is, tea that has already lost its flavor, you are telling that person to go drink mate somewhere else.

ROLANDO RIBERA
Cochabamba, Bolivia

Tea at Grandma's House

Every time my eyes encounter the old, blue and white, enameled Chinese teapot on the kitchen cabinet, I remember Grandma Hortensia. How can I ever forget having tea at my grandmother's house? The countless afternoons spent with her are still vivid memories of moments in my life that I will cherish forever. As I entered her house, I smelled the sweet aroma of fresh tea and cookies (Brazilian nut cookies were my favorite). I would run into the kitchen to kiss Grandma, sit at the table, and watch how she patiently prepared everything for the tea hour. I enjoyed helping her set the table. She carefully told me how to put the cups, saucers, teaspoons, and napkins in the correct position. After the table was set, she would begin the ritual of preparing the tea. First, she put her teapot with water on the stove and waited until it started to boil. She opened the kitchen cabinet and took out the bag of Crusader tea. Then, she put four spoonfuls of tea in the teapot, added some cinnamon, and squeezed a few drops of lemon juice in, too. She waited for about ten more minutes until we could smell the cinnamon and lemon blend with the tea. At this point, she took the teapot off the stove and with the help of a strainer poured a little of that delicious elixir in each tea cup. Then we added hot water and some sugar and began to enjoy her tea. Of course, the cookies also played an important role, but they are material for another story.

ITSUO EMORI
Tatebayashi, Japan

Tea is just Tea

“Would you like to have tea with us next Sunday?” asked Mr. Brown, our neighbor next door.

“Yes, we’d love to. What time should we come?” I replied.

“Come by my house at one o’clock.”

“Fine. I’m looking forward to visiting you. See you then!”

Mr. Brown had been very kind and helpful to my wife and me when we lived in New Zealand. We looked forward to visiting him. There was a problem with our conversation, however. I didn’t understand his suggested time. I had been used to taking tea in the staff room at the school where I taught as an exchange teacher, but tea time was always around 10:30 in the morning and 2:30 in the afternoon. One o’clock seemed

strange to me. I told one of the teachers about Mr. Brown’s invitation.

“In that case,” he advised me, “tea means a meal. Tea often means a meal here in New Zealand.”

“So Mr. Brown must be serving a delicious meal to us,” I said to myself, from my Japanese point of view. The next Sunday, my wife and I skipped breakfast and went hungry, waiting for one o’clock. During our stay at our neighbor’s house, we had a very good time, drinking tea and chatting. After about an hour, however, we hadn’t been served our meal, so we told him, “We must be going now.” After returning home, my wife complained to me that she had missed lunch and began to cook something for us. We were hungry and ate a lot! So we found out that tea was just tea, even in New Zealand.

LINDA DE MEILLON
Benoni, South Africa

The last thing at night, around 10:30, when the house is quiet and my baby is asleep, I have my last cup of aromatic Rooibosch tea. Rooibos, as it is locally known, yields some mystery in every flavourful sip. Years ago, local inhabitants dried the needle-like leaves of the indigenous plant, creating a tasty, perfumed tea. Containing all the goodness needed for a busy, healthy lifestyle, this pep-me-up has no additives or preservatives. It has no caffeine, so it’s just the thing to calm hypertension, irritability, and tensions of the day. My baby loves it: during the day with cherry flavor it’s thirst quenching, and at night with milk it’s a soothing bedtime drink. My day has not started without a revitalizing cup of Rooibos tea. When my day is done, it’s my perfect pleasure!

SVETLANA PECHORKINA
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Writing about tea brings warm feelings to my heart, because where I was raised (in the former Soviet Union), tea is a sign of hospitality, a source of enjoyment, and a symbol of friendship. It was hard to find high quality tea during the deficits of the Soviet era, and people often would spend hours standing in lines for a little box of Indian, Ceylonese, or Georgian tea. When I was growing up, my favorite kind of tea was Indian tea. Strong and tasty, it was packed in colorful boxes with elephants on the label. For me, as a little girl, the box was a piece of an exotic and mysterious culture from far away. Tea served with sugar, honey, or jam kept me warm and energetic on the way to school every morning. In the evening, we had tea with sweets, such as candy or pastries. In Central Asia, *chaikhana*s, or tea rooms, are popular places for social and business meetings. Unlike the Russian tradition of drinking out of tea cups or saucers, Central Asian tradition is to drink tea out of pialas, small ceramic bowls. In my family, we had tea cups and pialas, and tea always tasted good in both!



“Tea connects people of different cultures. I will always remember a beautiful occasion at a London hotel. I was feeling lonely until I noticed a tea tray. At that particular moment, I felt like I was home, relaxed, safe, and warmed.”

BEATA SZALA • *Poznań, Poland*



AP PHOTO/JALIL BOUNHAR

J. FRANÇOIS VILMENAY
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Haitians use a large variety of indigenous plants to make herbal teas with medicinal properties. Some of these are vervain, almond, red jasmine, hibiscus, custard apple, mustard, okra, soursop, basilic, sorossi... the list goes on and on! Generally, we drink herbal tea for two main purposes: to prevent and to cure illness. For example, middle-aged Haitians drink almond tea to stabilize their arterial pressure. Some people drink red jasmine tea to fight flu and bronchitis. Soursop tea fights indigestion, and mustard tea stimulates the intestinal tract. A cup of freshly brewed okra tea is recommended to relieve a stomachache, and a cup of lemon tea kills tapeworms. In Haiti, if someone asks you to sit down and have a cup of vervain tea, then you can brace yourself for bad news. Vervain tea is served in this circumstance because it can sooth stress. Herbal tea plays a vital role in the lives of Haitian people. It is the backbone of folk medicine and the elixir of life.

JOYCE MILAMBILING
Iowa, United States

Homage to Hu Kwa

My experience with tea was transformed a decade ago on a cold winter day in New York. I took a walk with friends along the waterfront for several hours, and I was cold from my ears to my feet. "Tea?" asked Paul when we went to their apartment in downtown Brooklyn after our walk. I would have preferred a cup of coffee, but anything warm would do. I went to the kitchen where my host was spooning tea from a black tin. "Hu Kwa," it read, "Imported from Taiwan." A few minutes later he set a mug of steaming tea in front of me. The steam carried a dark, smoky smell. The rich aroma was a precursor to the taste. As I drank the warm liquid, I felt it start to crack the cold I had been feeling throughout my body. It was something that took effect slowly, eventually warming even the bottoms of my feet. Since then, I have always had some type of dark tea, preferably Hu Kwa, on my kitchen shelf. I live where we have bone-chilling winters, and this tea is part of my afternoon ritual on the coldest days.

BARBORA BUDIKOVA
Brno, Czech Republic

Tea Stands for Togetherness

As teachers, we lead busy lives, ruled by lesson planning, class time, and staff meetings. This leaves us with little chance to stop for a bit during our workday. We hardly find the time to make, nor quietly enjoy, a nice cup of tea. A year ago, we treated ourselves to a new addition to our

office—a vacuum flask. It has since become valued property; only the dictionary and computer are held in higher esteem! Now, nothing can be nicer than rushing into the office during the break time and hearing a colleague say, "Would you like a cup of tea?" While she is pouring the golden brew, I realize that it is not only about quenching thirst. It's about caring and sharing, about being looked after and being a member of a community.

MUHUMUZA EVARIST
Mbarara, Uganda

An Hour with my Grandmother

I like taking tea on a cold and chilly evening with my old grandmother Kaaka. As she sits on her mat, I sit on a curved African stool in the courtyard. The gentle breeze ushers in the scent of wild lilies. I hold out my clay mug repeatedly. Then my grandmother serves me roasted groundnuts and one big sweet potato, which I hold with my left hand. They are good and natural. "My son, take it all. Take your fill," she says. Grandmother forbids using sugar. "Potatoes are sweeter," she insists. Besides the tea, on these occasions I enjoy the endless tales about her youthful days. After an hour or so I throw off my oversize pullover. I leave hardly a drop in the mug and this pleases her, prompting her to smile. It's already dark. Happily, I retire to the family cottage, leaving her to begin saying her evening prayers. Tomorrow I am there again for our routine, my favourite occasion of having tea.

STEVEN DARIAN
Kiev, Ukraine

Soup in Tea Clothing

A friend and I were visiting a Tibetan monastery to order some paintings and look around. The Tibetans were incredibly hospitable; you could not refuse them. The abbot offered us a cup of Tibetan tea, which I had forgotten was made of rancid yak butter and salt. I took the first sip and nearly choked. My companion managed to down two cups. Afterwards as we were walking down the path from the monastery, I turned to her and said, "Actually, it wasn't the tea I couldn't stomach. It was really a matter of classifying. If I had thought of it as soup, there would have been no problem drinking it."

HUSNE JAHAN ALAM
Dhaka, Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, tea plants grow on the rain-drenched eastern slopes of the country. Tender leaves and buds are hand picked by female workers, then dried and fer-

mented to make green or black tea. Black tea is a common, affordable drink that is part of a working class breakfast with bread and bananas. It is sold at stalls on street corners in urban areas. Water keeps boiling in large kettles all day long, and tea is poured into small cups with milk and enough sugar to make steaming, stimulating “sherbet.” Tea vendors get on long distance buses and trains, or stand outside jingling empty cups or glasses next to their kettles of hot, sweetened tea with milk. Tired passengers succumb to the inviting nectar. At home, the classic tea hours are breakfast time and late afternoon. Visitors are always entertained with tea and snacks.

RATNA JUSTIANTO
Jakarta, Indonesia

My favorite tea was Teh Ibu Gurud, which means Mrs. Gurud’s tea. It was named so because Ibu Gurud prepared it. She was the only teacher among us who came to school bringing a small earthen teapot. She would go straight to the school pantry and prepare the tea herself. It consisted of tea, lump sugar (also called stone sugar), and of course water. She left the pot filled with hot sweet tea on the pantry counter and went to class to teach. During the break, all of the teachers started going to the pantry to look for Ibu Gurud’s tea. It was very popular among us because of its exotic taste. To drink her thick and dark tea, we filled the tea cup only half full, then added some hot water. She used a kind of Javanese tea named Gopek that tasted different from the tea from other parts of the country. After Mrs. Gurud retired, we could not afford such tea anymore, even though she left the earthen teapot with us.

MIGUEL ARAUJO HIDALGO
Riobamba, Ecuador

My favorite tea is *guayusa*, which is made from the leaves of an indigenous tree that grows in the Ecuadorian Amazon region. The green leaves are cut off the tree, which can grow as tall as 10 meters, and then dried on a string. Typically about 200 leaves are strung together, forming a “necklace,” which may be kept for months. When the leaves turn brown, they are ready to be used to prepare a delicious drink enjoyed hot or cold by men, women, and children. To make guayusa tea, between 2 and 4 dried leaves are added to a liter of boiling water. Some people add sugar and lemon, but usually it is drunk unsweetened. People who drink guayusa tea every day remain healthy because of its medicinal properties. It can reduce ailments and dream disorders, and it acts as a muscular stimulant. The first time I had guayusa tea, I was on a trip with some friends. After drinking the tea, I slept for 10 hours! They didn’t know what was happening and took me to the hospital. When I woke up I was very happy and well rested, but they wanted to kick me. In the jungle region, people also make cigars from the dried guayusa leaves and smoke them.

Love Letter to a Tea Lover

ANA DEISTER
Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Drink your tea and think of me
The heat of the china on your hands
Will be like mine in thee
The steam coming from the scented hollow
Bringing memories

Put some honey in it, and stir slowly
Be conscious of the bell-like sound
Of the tiny spoon
Maybe the saucer where you place it
Will carry thoughts to the moon
Think of me: I will be there, too

The color of the water, like a flowing river
Will tell you how wide can my love be
The flavor that comes to your nostrils
Will make your tongue whisper “We...”

And when you finally decide to swallow
Sip by sip
The glowing liquid
Without knowing it
You will be carrying me
Inside you
Very deep



We thank these other readers for their interesting and informative responses to the survey and regret there wasn’t space to include them:

SOUICI MOHAMED LAKHDAR *Meggatine, Algeria* •
BOUTKHIL GUEMIDE *Béchar, Algeria* • SOUHILA
MEKHOUKH *Sétif, Algeria* • RAHMANE MOUFIDA
Ouled Djellal, Algeria • MARIA LAURA BORLA *Ushua-*
ia, Argentina • IZA MURADI *Zardabi, Azerbaijan* •
MARTIN PARKER *Manama, Bahrain* • KLARA POLAK
POLJAREVIĆ *Senj, Croatia* • ARMANDO CORRAL *Villa*
Clara, Cuba • LIDIA NAŠINCOVÁ *Prague, Czech*
Republic • LINA VELLUCCI *Rome, Italy* • NANCY PRICE
Oklahoma, United States • TERESA B. MANDL *Colo-*
nia del Sacramento, Uruguay • ISMOALIEV DIL-
SHOD AVAZBEKOVICH *Tashkent, Uzbekistan* • OMAR
CHADLI *Naama, Algeria*

“Tea preparation is an art by itself.”

RAHMANE ABDELKARIM, *Ouled Djellal, Algeria*

RECIPES

Dilip Bhatt • *Savarkundla, India*

There are more than 50 local and international brands of tea available in the bazaar in the region of Gujarat where I live, and there are innumerable methods of preparing tea. May I suggest for *Forum* readers the most popular and tasty Gujarati method of preparing tea? Actually before making tea, we first prepare “tea masala,” a mixture of spices in powdered form. Grind these ingredients in a mixer to make 50 grams of powdered masala:

- Dry ginger (20 grams)
- Cinnamon, cloves, cardamom (10 grams each)

Then we prepare a second, “green masala” by combining:

- 5 or 6 crushed leaves of each of the following: mint, basil, lemon leaves
- A little ginger paste

Here is how to prepare the tea:

Step 1: Boil 2 cups of water along with two teaspoons of dry tea

Step 2: Add 2 teaspoons of sugar and stir until the sugar is dissolved

Step 3: Add 2 cups of milk and simmer the liquid

Step 4: Add 5 grams of the powdered tea masala and continue to heat

Step 5: Add the green masala and heat two more minutes

Step 6: Filter the tea and serve it hot

Lalouli Houda • *Touggourt, Algeria*

In southern Algeria, most people drink tea, but with slight differences in preparation from one region to another. I am glad to explain our traditional method of preparing tea in Touggourt.

Tea is prepared on embers in front of guests, relatives, and family members. The utensils used are:

- two teapots, one big and one small
- a large glass
- tea glasses for each person

The ingredients are:

- 50 grams of green tea (dry leaves)
- 100 grams of sugar
- 1 liter of water
- a quantity of fresh mint

While the water is boiling in the big teapot, put the tea leaves in the small teapot and add a small quantity of the boiling water in order to clean the leaves. After that, pour more of the boiling water into the

small teapot and put it on the embers to boil slowly. Meanwhile, put sugar and mint in the large glass. After the tea in the small teapot has been brewing for 10 to 15 minutes, pour some into the glass with mint and sugar and stir it. Pour this first taste into the small tea glasses, and serve it with roasted nuts.

This operation is repeated twice, so that everyone has three small glasses of tea. The aim of this method of preparing tea is to keep the good flavour of tea and to have different tastes because the first mouthful should be more concentrated than the second and third. I hope you enjoy our local tea preparation. I am glad to invite you for tea and conviviality around the palm trees in the desert.

Abdelaziz Bingaid • *Ghardaïa, Algeria*

In my town in the Sahara of Algeria, tea is usually taken after lunch or dinner for it helps digestion. It is also served to guests. The way tea is prepared in my region is unique. The following items are essential to prepare tea:

- two teapots
- a kettle
- a large cup
- tea glasses for each person

The person preparing tea, in my region usually a man, puts green tea (imported from China) in one of the teapots and fresh mint leaves in the other. The kettle is used to boil water. He puts a small quantity of boiling water in the first teapot to clean the green tea leaves, then throws it out. He puts more hot water in the teapot and boils it again with the green tea. Then, he pours this tea in the second teapot, which contains the mint. To sweeten the tea, he pours from the second teapot into the large glass, which contains sugar. He must hold the teapot high above the glass so that the falling hot tea melts the sugar rapidly. When the sweet solution is ready, it is poured into tea glasses. This is the “first cup.” To obtain the “second cup,” he needs to pour boiling water from the kettle into the first teapot again and go through the same stages. The second cup is not as dark and concentrated as the first. There is usually a “third cup” that is made especially for children. They are not allowed to drink the first cup because it is said that it is not good for their health.

Thank you for this opportunity to tell about tea in the Sahara.