

Tea-licious bites

Tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world and chefs have tried to use the flavour and aroma of tea to create interesting food combinations

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THE ASIAN AGE

Tea is a must have beverage in most Indian homes. The humble brew has come a long way. At a recent city event, celebrity chef, Vicky Ratnani used tea along with whole spices, butter and olive oil to create a broth to cook chicken breast and cottage cheese. The dish had a lingering taste and flavour. We talk to city chefs about how tea can be used in numerous ways in various dishes.

TEA-BASED DISHES

"The flavour of *masala* tea is quite strong and manages to retain its individuality amidst spices like cardamom, cinnamon and cloves. The brown rich stain that it infuses in the chicken and the paneer makes it look very palatable," said Vicky at the tea and food pairing event, *Out of the Pot*, organised by the UK-based tea brand, Typhoo. He prepared *masala* tea poached chicken with *masala* mashed potato and pickled cucumber ribbons. Sandeep Panwar, executive chef, The Metropolitan Hotel and Spa uses the tea water to prepare a soya *chaap* dish. "The use of tea water is to add a dash of brown to the *chaap*. We add tea water at the end and cook the *chaap* for five to seven minutes," he says.

TEA FLAVOURED DISHES

"Tea can be used creatively in making some special dishes like *Dhungar Ke Murg*, where chicken is placed in the centre in a separate vessel and tea is poured in the surrounding,



Masala tea poached chicken with masala mashed potato and pickled cucumber ribbons; (below) green tea creme brûlée

which adds slightly bitter, astringent flavour to the chicken. Tea is not used to marinate or cook the chicken, in this case. Rather it is utilised for additional flavour which is there, yet one can't make out the presence of the tea," says

Mohd Irfan, chef de cuisine, Hilton, Janakpuri.

TEA-BASED DESSERTS

Have you ever thought about a tea-based dessert? Tea infused desserts are

high on demand amongst tea lovers. "The green tea creme brûlée, a twist to classical french cuisine, is rich and earthy, ethereal and soft, crispy and sweet. It is made using special *matcha* green tea to balance its herbaciousness and toastiness with the sweetness of a dairy custard milk to give it a light texture," says executive chef, Diwas Wadhwa, Mosaic Hotels.

Another interesting dessert is the black and white chocolate *gateaux*, *tea anglaise*. "Since it is a *gateaux*, which is made of black and white chocolate, I wanted to give it a taste that would go well, create balance and last on palate. I infused it with the Darjeeling tea and it turned yummy," says chef Jitender Singh, Amour-The Patio Restaurant.

Tea helps in creating balance, gives lingering flavour and goes well in a classic french *gateaux*

CHEF JITENDER SINGH
AMOUR



PEPPERED COTTAGE CHEESE IN MASALA CHAI STOCK

For *peppered cottage cheese*

- ▶ 140 gm cottage cheese cut into medallions
- ▶ 1 tbsp mixed peppercorns
- ▶ 1 tbsp corn flour
- ▶ Olive oil for pan searing

Method

Mix cornflour and peppercorn in a dish. Dust the cottage cheese pieces with it and fry in the pan on either side.

For the *Masala Mash*

- ▶ 400 gm mashed potatoes
- ▶ 1-2 tbsp olive oil
- ▶ 1 tbsp cumin seeds
- ▶ ½ tbsp mustard seeds
- ▶ 1 tbsp ginger, finely minced
- ▶ fresh coriander leaves
- ▶ 50 gm butter
- ▶ salt, pepper according to taste

Method

Boil the peeled potatoes in salted water and cook. Dry the potatoes well, and while the potatoes are still hot, mash it. Heat the butter in a pan, and add the mustard and cumin seeds. When they begin to crackle, add the rest of the ingredients (except the mashed potatoes) and fry well. Add the mashed potatoes mixture to this. Season to taste and mix well.

For the *Masala chai stock*

- ▶ 300ml *masala* tea bag infused water/stock
- ▶ 1 tbsp sliced ginger
- ▶ Whole spices (2 cardamom, 1 cinnamon stick, 2 peppercorns, 1 bay leaf and a pinch of mace)

Method

Infuse the *masala* chai stock with the spices in a saucepan. Bring to a gentle simmer. Strain the tea into another pan. Place the peppered cottage into the stock and poach for 15 minutes.

Rest until needed. Strain the stock and add a dash of cream. Now add half-teaspoon to butter. Serve the *chai* sauce with the cottage cheese and the *masala* mash.