



## A Question of Taste

By Hilary Keating Callaghan

### How to brew a proper cup of tea

My father and his brother were raised by their grandmother during the Depression. In order to support herself and the two boys, she took up the "trade" of spiritualism. Some of her predictive powers came from reading tea leaves.

The current popularity of the occult, coupled with the direction of the economy, might spur a revival of such entrepreneurial endeavors. Whatever direction such a revival might take, it is unlikely to include the reading of tea leaves. The spirits would have a difficult time communicating through the powder in a tea bag.

With the advent of the tea bag, loose tea has almost disappeared and more than occult graphics have been sacrificed in the switch.

It is widely believed that a cup of tea can be made by plopping a tea bag into a mug or tin pitcher of warm water. It can't.

THERE IS a ceremony involved in brewing a proper cup of tea.

The first step is to pour very hot water into a saucer and teapot to warm it. This water is poured out and replaced by water which has just reached a boil. Tea leaves (1 tsp. for each 5 to 6 oz. of water) are dropped in and allowed to steep from 3 to 5 minutes. The tea is then poured through a strainer into an-

other pot. If the leaves are allowed to sit longer in the tea, the result is a bitter taste. A tea ball may be used rather than the strainer for convenience.

The pot should be covered with a tea cozy to retain the heat. Probably due to our national coffee bias, the tea cozy is a difficult item to locate. The best selection is probably available in Windsor. The only local store I am aware of that carries a tea cozy at all is Quinn's Irish Gifts in Birmingham.

Savoring a properly made cup of tea is a pleasure that is peculiarly suited to Michigan's cold, damp springs. Served steaming hot with sugar, milk (never cream), lemon, or even a shot of brandy, it should banish the chill of even the bleakest late winter day.

FOR A LITTLE added sustenance, try serving some scones, fresh from the oven, with honey, jam, or an unusual strawberry butter, flavored with a promise of warm summer days to come.

If you are fortunate enough to find fresh strawberries for this delicate spread, save a few, along with some of the hot tea, to create a drink worlds removed from commercial iced teas.

The English Breakfast Tea specified for the Strawberry Tea should be easy to find, but don't stop there. Search out a source of fine teas and experiment

with an adventurous variety. Try starting out with the rich Darjeeling tea of India or Chinese Keemun, the original unblended English Breakfast Tea. More exotic in taste are the smoky Souchong teas. Formosan Oolong, known as "the champagne of teas," might be an interesting change from the black teas with which we are most familiar.

The delicate green teas of China and Japan might provide yet another taste experience. Finally, it might be fun to combine various types to create your own custom blends.

#### SCOTTISH SCONES

3 cups unsifted flour  
3 cups rolled oats  
1 tsp. salt  
1 1/2 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. cream of tartar  
2 tsp. sugar  
1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts  
1/2 cup butter  
1 1/4 cups milk

Pre heat oven to 425 degrees. Mix all dry ingredients; toss out thoroughly in the dry ingredients to distribute them evenly. Cut in the butter with a pastry blender. Add milk and mix, tossing with a fork to form a soft dough. Divide into 3 parts. Work with one part of dough at a time. Pat out on a floured

board with floured hands to a round 1/2-inch thick or slightly more. Cut each round with a floured knife into 5 or 6 wedges; place on a greased cookie sheet. Bake for 15 minutes or until brown in 425-degree oven. Serve hot with butter and jam. 16 wedges.

#### STRAWBERRY BUTTER

1 stick sweet butter, softened (not margarine)  
3 tbsp. finely chopped fresh strawberries  
1 tsp. powdered sugar

Combine all ingredients in a blender or food processor with a steel knife. Whip until light. Serve with warm biscuits.

#### STRAWBERRY TEA

1/4 cup sliced strawberries  
1/4 cup strong English Breakfast Tea  
2 tsp. lemon juice  
1 tsp. fine granulated sugar

Pure the strawberries in a blender; strain the puree through a fine sieve into a tall glass. Set aside. Dissolve the sugar in the hot tea; add the lemon juice, chill. Stir the chilled tea into the strawberry puree. Add 4 ice cubes and garnish the drink with a strawberry. Makes 1 drink.

### In European cookery

## Mushroom comes into its own

Mushrooms are plentiful all over Europe. This is obvious by their frequent appearance in soups, appetizers, salads, stews, stuffings and side dishes on each country's menus.

Certainly, traveling gourmets have cherished the French "champignons" and the Italian "funghi" for years. In northern and central Europe, too, the mushroom comes into its own.

In Denmark, mushrooms abound. In Hungary, this elegant edible is often used as an ingredient in paprikas dishes. When cooked in stews such as this, the mushrooms' chewy, meaty, texture comes through, almost as if they were an extension of the meat.

The Hungarian Pork Mushroom Stew, below, makes a hearty company dish. The cubed pork is browned first and the fat discarded. Then tomatoes, carrots, celery, onion and rosy paprika are added and set to simmer. Sliced mushrooms are added next and simmered for another half hour. Sour cream is stirred in for creaminess at the last, and the stew is traditionally served with buttered noodles.

Danish Chicken Stew makes a great Sunday family dinner dish. In addition to the savory mushrooms, it includes onions and carrots and is seasoned with a mixture of dill, thyme and cloves. The thickened juices make a delicious gravy which goes over noodles or mashed potatoes.

#### HUNGARIAN PORK AND MUSHROOM STEW

1/4 cup safflower oil  
2 lbs. boneless pork shoulder, cut into 1-inch pieces  
3 cups chopped tomatoes (4 medium)  
1 cup sliced carrots  
1 cup sliced celery  
1/2 cup chopped onion  
1 tsp. paprika  
1 1/2 tsp. salt  
1/4 tsp. ground black pepper  
1 lb. fresh mushrooms  
1 cup dairy sour cream  
1 tsp. all-purpose flour

In a large saucepan, heat oil until hot. Add pork; brown on all sides. Drain and discard fat. Add tomatoes, carrots, celery, onion, paprika, salt and black pepper; simmer, covered, for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Rinse, pat dry and slice mushrooms. Add mushrooms to saucepan; continue to simmer, covered, for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Combine sour cream and flour; stir into stew. Cook until thickened, about 5 minutes, stirring constantly. Serve with buttered noodles, if desired.

#### DANISH CHICKEN AND MUSHROOM STEW

4 cups chicken broth or bouillon  
1 1/2 tsp. salt  
1 1/4 tsp. dill weed, divided  
1 tsp. thyme leaves, crushed



Mushrooms come into their own in many European dishes. Hungarian Pork and Mushroom Stew is served over noodles.

1/4 tsp. ground cloves  
1/4 tsp. ground black pepper  
3 lbs. chicken parts  
1 cup chopped onions  
1 lb. fresh mushrooms  
1 1/2 cups carrots cut in 1-inch pieces  
2 tsp. lemon juice  
1/4 cup water  
5 tsp. flour

In a large sauce pot combine chicken broth, salt, 1 tsp. of the dill, thyme, cloves and black pepper. Bring to a boil. Add chicken and onions. Reduce heat and simmer, covered, until chicken is partially cooked, about 35 minutes. Meanwhile, rinse, pat dry and cut mushrooms in halves. Add to sauce pot

along with carrots, lemon juice and remaining 1/4 tsp. dill. Simmer, covered, until chicken and vegetables are tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Mix water and flour; stir into stew; mix well. Cook and stir until thickened, about 2 minutes. Serve over noodles or mashed potatoes, if desired. Yield: 4 portions.



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