

My culture and tradition!

Brothers and sisters! Here it's Alex Garcia, a deafblind person from Brazil. This message is a little bit different but I believe it's interesting. I invite you all to know more about "My culture and tradition". On April, 24th, it was celebrated the "Mate/Chimarrão Day" and with the following photo I "made my appearance". ! It's me in the photo. I am holding the "mate gourd" and I am wearing "Che Guevara's beret" that I brought from Cuba after my trip there. Best regards and please read the following text! Alex Garcia.



Mate (beverage)

Sometimes hypercorrected as maté in English, but never in Spanish or Portuguese, where it is often called "jerba"), also known as yerba mate, chimarrão (Portuguese or cimarrón (Spanish), is a traditional South American caffeine-rich infused drink, particularly in Argentina (where it is defined by law as the "national infusion"), Uruguay, Paraguay, the Bolivian Chaco, Southern Chile and Southern Brazil. It is also consumed in Syria, the largest importer in the world, and in Lebanon.

It is prepared by steeping dried leaves of yerba mate (*Ilex paraguariensis*, known in Portuguese as *erva-mate*) in hot water and is served with a metal straw from a shared hollow calabash gourd. The straw is called a *bombilla* in Spanish, a *bomba* in Portuguese, and a *bombija* or, more generally, a *masassa* (straw) in Arabic. The straw is traditionally made of silver. Modern, commercially available straws are typically made of nickel silver, called *alpaca*; stainless steel, or hollow-stemmed cane. The gourd is known as a *mate* or a *guampa*; while in Brazil, it has the specific name of *cuiá*, or also *cabaça* (the name for Indigenous-influenced calabash gourds in other regions of Brazil, still used for general food and drink in remote regions). Even if the water is supplied from a modern thermos, the infusion is traditionally drunk from *mates* or *cuiás*.

Yerba mate leaves are dried, chopped, and ground into a powdery mixture called *yerba*. The *bombilla* acts as both a straw and a sieve. The submerged end is flared, with small holes or slots that allow the brewed liquid in, but block the chunky matter

that makes up much of the mixture. A modern bombilla design uses a straight tube with holes, or a spring sleeve to act as a sieve.

"Tea-bag" type infusions of mate (Spanish: mate cocido, Portuguese: chá mate) have been on the market in Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay for many years under such trade names as "Taragüi" in Argentina, "Pajarito" and "Kurupí" in Paraguay, and Matte Leão in Brazil.

Name

A typical bomba/bombilla or straw Both the spellings "mate" and "maté" are used in English. An acute accent in Spanish indicates the stressed syllable in a word; an accent on the "e" sometimes seen in English is a hypercorrection used to indicate that the word and its pronunciation are distinct from the English word "mate". As the Yerba Mate Association of the Americas points out, with the accent the word "maté" in Spanish means "I killed".

In Brazil, traditionally prepared mate is known as chimarrão, although the word mate and the expression "mate amargo" (bitter mate) are also used in Argentina and Uruguay. The Spanish cimarrón means "rough", "brute", or "barbarian", but is most widely understood to mean "feral", and is used in almost all of Latin America for domesticated animals that have become wild. The word was then used by the people who colonized the region of the Río de la Plata to describe the natives' rough and sour drink, drunk with no other ingredient to soften the taste.

Preparation

The preparation of mate is a simple process, consisting of filling a container with yerba, pouring hot, but not boiling, water over the leaves, and drinking with a straw, the bombilla, which acts as a filter so as to draw only the liquid and not the yerba leaves. The method of preparing the mate infusion varies considerably from region to region, and which method yields the finest outcome is debated. However, nearly all methods have some common elements. The beverage is traditionally prepared in a gourd recipient, also called mate or guampa in Spanish and cuia in Portuguese, from which it is drunk. The gourd is nearly filled with yerba, and hot water, typically at 70 to 85 °C (158 to 185 °F), never boiling, is added.

The most common preparation involves a careful arrangement of the yerba within the gourd before adding hot water. In this method, the gourd is first filled one-half to three-quarters of the way with yerba. Too much yerba will result in a "short" mate; conversely, too little yerba results in a "long" mate, both being considered undesirable. After that, any additional herbs (yuyo, in Portuguese jujo) may be added for either health or flavor benefits, a practice most common in Paraguay, where people acquire herbs from a local yuyera (herbalist) and use the mate as a base for their herbal infusions. When the gourd is adequately filled, the preparer typically grasps it with the full hand, covering and roughly sealing the opening with the palm. Then the mate is turned upside-down, and shaken vigorously, but briefly and with gradually decreasing force, in this inverted position. This causes the finest, most powdery particles of the yerba to settle toward the preparer's palm and the top of the mate.

Once the yerba mate has settled, the mate is carefully brought to a near-sideways angle, with the opening tilted just slightly upward of the base. The mate is then shaken very gently with a side-to-side motion. This further settles the yerba mate inside the gourd so that the finest particles move toward the opening and the yerba is layered along one side. The largest stems and other bits create a partition between the empty space on one side of the gourd and the lopsided pile of yerba on the other.

After arranging the yerba along one side of the gourd, the mate is carefully tilted back onto its base, minimizing further disturbances of the yerba as it is re-oriented to allow consumption. Some settling is normal, but is not desirable. The angled mound of yerba should remain, with its powdery peak still flat and mostly level with the top of the gourd. A layer of stems along its slope will slide downward and accumulate in the space opposite the yerba (though at least a portion should remain in place).

Homemade bamboo bombillas

Typical silver mate straw. All of this careful settling of the yerba ensures that each sip contains as little particulate matter as possible, creating a smooth-running mate. The finest particles will then be as distant as possible from the filtering end of the straw. With each draw, the smaller particles would inevitably move toward the straw, but the larger particles and stems filter much of this out. A sloped arrangement provides consistent concentration and flavor with each filling of the mate.

Now the mate is ready to receive the straw. Wetting the yerba by gently pouring cool water into the empty space within the gourd until the water nearly reaches the top, and then allowing it to be absorbed into the yerba before adding the straw, allows the preparer to carefully shape and "pack" the yerba's slope with the straw's filtering end, which makes the overall form of the yerba within the gourd more resilient and solid. Dry yerba, though, allows a cleaner and easier insertion of the straw, but care must be taken so as not to overly disturb the arrangement of the yerba. Such a decision is entirely a personal or cultural preference. The straw is inserted with one's thumb on the upper end of the gourd, at an angle roughly perpendicular to the slope of the yerba, so that its filtering end travels into the deepest part of the yerba and comes to rest near or against the opposite wall of the gourd. It is important for the thumb to form a seal over the end of the straw when it is being inserted, or the negative pressure produced will draw in undesirable particulates.

Brewing

After the above process, the yerba may be brewed. If the straw is inserted into dry yerba, the mate must first be filled once with cool water as above, then be allowed to absorb it completely (which generally takes no more than two or three minutes). Treating the yerba with cool water before the addition of hot water is essential, as it protects the yerba mate from being scalded and from the chemical breakdown of some of its desirable nutrients. Hot water may then be added by carefully pouring it, as with the cool water before, into the cavity opposite the yerba, until it reaches almost to the top of the gourd when the yerba is fully saturated. Care should be taken to maintain the dryness of the swollen top of the yerba beside the edge of the gourd's opening.

Once the hot water has been added, the mate is ready for drinking, and it may be refilled many times before becoming lavado (washed out) and losing its flavor. When this occurs, the mound of yerba can be pushed from one side of the gourd to the other, allowing water to be added along its opposite side; this revives the mate for additional refillings and is called "reformat o/el mate" (reforming the mate).

Etiquette

Mate is traditionally drunk in a particular social setting, such as family gatherings or with friends. The same gourd (cuia) and straw (bomba/bombilla) are used by everyone drinking. One person (known in Portuguese as the preparador, cebador, or patrão, and in Spanish as the cebador) assumes the task of server. Typically, the cebador fills the gourd and drinks the mate completely to ensure that it is free of particulate matter and of good quality. In some places, passing the first brew of mate to another drinker is considered bad manners, as it may be too cold or too strong; for this reason, the first brew is often called mate del zonzo (mate of the fool). The cebador possibly drinks the second filling, as well, if he or she deems it too cold or bitter. The cebador subsequently refills the gourd and passes it to the drinker to his or her right, who likewise drinks it all (there is not much; the mate is full of yerba, with room for little water), and returns it without thanking the server; a final gracias (thank you) implies that the drinker has had enough. The only exception to this order is if a new guest joins the group; in this case the new arrival receives the next mate, and then the cebador resumes the order of serving, and the new arrival will receive his or hers depending on his placement in the group. When no more tea remains, the straw makes a loud sucking noise, which is not considered rude. The ritual proceeds around the circle in this mode until the mate becomes lavado (washed out), typically after the gourd has been filled about 10 times or more depending on the yerba used (well-aged yerba mate is typically more potent, so provides a greater number of refills) and the ability of the cebador. When one has had one's fill of mate, he or she politely thanks the cebador, passing the mate back at the same time. It is impolite for anyone but the cebador to move the bombilla or otherwise mess with the mate; the cebador may take exception to this and not offer it to the offender again. When someone takes too long, others in the roda (Spanish: ronda; English: "round") will likely politely warn him or her by saying "bring the talking gourd" (cuia de conversar); an Argentine equivalent, especially among young people, being no es un micrófono ("it's not a microphone"), an allusion to the drinkers holding the mate for too long, as if they were using it as a microphone to deliver a lecture.

Some drinkers like to add sugar or honey, creating mate dulce or mate doce (sweet mate), instead of sugarless mate amargo (bitter mate), a practice said to be more common in Brazil outside its southernmost state. Some people also like to add lemon or orange peel, some herbs or even coffee, but these are mostly rejected by people who like to stick to the "original" mate. Traditionally, natural gourds are used, though wood vessels, bamboo tubes, and gourd-shaped mates, made of ceramic or metal (stainless steel or even silver) are also common. The gourd is traditionally made out of the porongo or cabaça fruit shell. Gourds are commonly decorated with silver, sporting decorative or heraldic designs with floral motifs. Some gourd mates with elaborated silver ornaments and silver bombillas are true pieces of jewelry and very sought after by collectors.

History

Mate was first consumed by the indigenous Guaraní and also spread by the Tupí people who lived in that part of southern Brazil which was Paraguayan territory before the Paraguayan War. Therefore, the scientific name of the yerba mate is *Ilex paraguariensis*. The consumption of yerba mate became widespread with the European colonization in the Spanish colony of Paraguay in the late 16th century, among both Spanish settlers and indigenous Guaraní, who consumed it before the Spanish arrival. Mate consumption spread in the 17th century to the Río de la Plata and from there to Chile. This widespread consumption turned it into Paraguay's main commodity above other wares such as tobacco, cotton and beef. Aboriginal labour was used to harvest wild stands. In the mid-17th century, Jesuits managed to domesticate the plant and establish plantations in their Indian reductions in the Paraguayan department of Misiones, sparking severe competition with the Paraguayan harvesters of wild strands. After their expulsion in the 1770s, the Jesuit missions – along with the yerba mate plantations – fell into ruins. The industry continued to be of prime importance for the Paraguayan economy after independence, but development in benefit of the Paraguayan state halted after the Paraguayan War (1864–1870) that devastated the country both economically and demographically.

Brazil then became the largest producer of mate. In Brazilian and Argentine projects in late 19th and early 20th centuries, the plant was domesticated once again, opening the way for plantation systems. When Brazilian entrepreneurs turned their attention to coffee in the 1930s, Argentina, which had long been the prime consumer, took over as the largest producer, resurrecting the economy of Misiones Province, where the Jesuits had once had most of their plantations. For years, the status of largest producer shifted between Brazil and Argentina.

Today, Brazil is the largest producer with 53%, followed by Argentina, 37%, and Paraguay, 10%.

Culture

Mate has a strong cultural significance both in terms of national identity and well as socially. Mate is the national drink of Argentina; Paraguay, where it is also consumed with either hot or ice cold water (see *tereré*); and Uruguay. Drinking mate is a common social practice in parts of Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and eastern Bolivia. Throughout the Southern Cone, it is considered to be a tradition taken from the *gauchos* or *vaqueros*, terms commonly used to describe the old residents of the South American pampas, chacos, or Patagonian grasslands, found principally in parts of Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, southeastern Bolivia, southern Chile and southern Brazil.

Parque Histórico do Mate, funded by the state of Paraná (Brazil), is a park aimed to educate people on the sustainable harvesting methods needed to maintain the integrity and vitality of the oldest wild forests of mate in the world.

Mate is also consumed as an ice tea in various regions of Brazil, originating both from an industrialized form, produced by Matte Leão, and from artisanal producers. It is part of the beach culture in Rio de Janeiro, where it is widely sold by beach vendors, being the hot infused variation uncommon in the area.

Health effects

A review of a number of population studies in 2009 revealed evidence of an association between esophageal cancer and hot mate drinking, but these population studies may not be conclusive. Some research has suggested the correlation with esophageal cancer results almost entirely from hot mate's temperature; similar links to cancer have been found for tea and other beverages generally consumed at high temperatures. While drinking mate at very hot temperatures is considered as "probably carcinogenic to humans" on the IARC Group 2A carcinogens list, mate itself is not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans.

Researchers from NCI (National Cancer Institutes) and Brazil found both cold- and hot-water extractions of popular commercial yerba mate products contained high levels (8.03 to 53.3 ng/g dry leaves) of carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) (i.e. benzopyrene). However, these potential carcinogenic compounds originated from the commercial drying process of the mate leaves, which involves smoke from the burning of wood, much like polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons found in wood-smoked meat. "Unsmoked" or steamed varieties of yerba mate tea are also available.

Other properties

Mate contains B and C vitamins, polyphenol antioxidants, and has a slightly higher antioxidant capacity than green tea. On average, mate tea contains 92 mg of the antioxidant chlorogenic acid per gram of dry leaves, and no catechins, giving it a significantly different antioxidant profile from other teas.

Legendary origins

The Guaraní people started drinking mate in a region that currently includes Paraguay, southern Brazil, southeastern Bolivia, northeastern Argentina and Uruguay. The Guaraní have a legend that says the Goddesses of the Moon and the Cloud came to the Earth one day to visit it, but they instead found a yaguareté (jaguar) that was going to attack them. An old man saved them, and, in compensation, the goddesses gave the old man a new kind of plant, from which he could prepare a "drink of friendship".

Variants

Another drink can be prepared with specially cut dry leaves, very cold water, and, optionally, lemon or another fruit juice, called tereré. It is very common in Paraguay, northeastern Argentina and in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. After pouring the water, it is considered proper to "wait while the saint has a sip" before the first person takes a drink. In southern Brazil, tererê is sometimes used as a derogatory term for a not hot enough chimarrão.

In Uruguay and Brazil, the traditional gourd is usually big with a corresponding large hole. In Argentina (especially in the capital Buenos Aires), the gourd is small and has a small hole and people sometimes add sugar for flavor.

In Uruguay, people commonly walk around the streets toting a mate and a thermos with hot water. In some parts of Argentina, gas stations sponsored by yerba mate producers provide free hot water to travelers, specifically for the purpose of drinking during the journey. Disposable mate sets with a plastic mate and straw and sets with a thermos flask and stacking containers for the yerba and sugar inside a fitted case are available.

In Argentina, mate cocido (boiled mate) is made with a teabag or leaves and drunk from a cup or mug, with or without sugar and milk. Companies such as Cabrales from Mar del Plata and Establecimiento Las Marías produce teabags for export to Europe.

Travel narratives, such as Maria Graham's *Journal of a Residence in Chile*, show a long history of mate drinking in central Chile. Many rural Chileans drink mate, in particular in the southern regions, particularly Magallanes, Aysén and Chiloé.

Mate is consumed as an ice tea in various regions of Brazil, in both artisanal and industrial forms. This is a bottle of industrialized mate ice tea, bought from a local supermarket in Rio de Janeiro.

In some parts of Syria, Lebanon and other middle eastern nations, drinking mate is common. The custom came from Arabs who moved to South America during the early 20th century, adopted the tradition, and kept it after returning to West Asia. Syria is the biggest importer of yerba mate in the world, importing 15,000 tons a year. Mostly, the Druze communities in Syria and Lebanon maintain the culture and practice of mate.

According to a major retailer of mate in San Luis Obispo, California, by 2004, mate had grown to about 5% of the overall natural tea market in North America. Loose mate is commercially available in much of North America. Bottled mate is increasingly available in the United States. Canadian bottlers have introduced a cane sugar-sweetened, carbonated variety, similar to soda pop. One brand, Sol Mate, produces 10-ounce glass bottles available at Canadian and U.S. retailers, making use of the translingual pun (English 'soul mate'; Spanish 'sun mate) for the sake of marketing.