

' happiness comes in with the tea-tray '

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growers and pickers in the tea industry, so look out for brands such as Clipper and Equal Exchange. It might be a few more pence for you, but for the workers that's worth a whole lot more. Why not vote for what's right with your wallet.

Nowadays, it seems choice is the buzzword in the world of the tealeaf. From your English Breakfast to Lapsang Souchang, the black tea still reigns supreme yet the humble herbal is fast catching up with a haze of flavours. They always smell nicer than they taste though, don't they? Try nutmeg, star anise, vanilla, cinnamon, and cloves to spice them up.

For a caffeine-free stimulant, peppermint will do it. To wind down, opt for a calming chamomile. Might take some getting used to as your mates roll up another herbal relaxant but hey. To beat sleepless nights, valerian is the answer but be warned it will smell temptingly like dog pee. Hangover? Then milk thistle will comfort your liver. Try feverfew for migraines and give ginseng a go for an energy boost.

For optimum flavour invest in an infuser and buy your tea loose from Pulse (Open Market) or Infinity Foods. Neal's Yard Remedies will even knock you up a unique mix for the special individual you obviously are - digestion tea, soothing bladder tea, you name it, they'll blend it.

For the serious tea head take the advice of Jane Campsie, author of *tea: the perfect brew* who recommends "if you are looking at the ideal vessel then always opt for a rounder, more bulbous shape rather than a straight-sided cup".

Having a cuppa signifies a break. From when the tea break was first estab-

lished in the UK 200 years ago and then legalised as a basic working right, tea has crossed factory lines and board meetings. Sipping the brown brew crosses cultures too. Always bubbling on the stove in Turkey; it's mint tea for the Moroccans; sweet chai sold on the streets of India; every country has it's fave. In Japan the ceremony of tea making is based on Zen meditation where every sip is an initiation into the discipline of the mind, and tea schools are commonplace!

Tea drinkers are divided. In my extensive research you either love or hate the wet stuff. How many sugars, the tricky issue of over stewing our under brewing, the colour of tea (brick brown, as it comes, milky white) is always a great subject for debate. Usually at four in the morning after a night out, mind. Although that's not always true. Sitting in a café last week, the next table's conversation held by four blokes focussed on the essential morning cuppa and whether to add milk before or after? Apparently "the most ridiculous thing in the world is to leave the teabag in and to then add milk. What are they thinking?" Mmm, probably not that deeply for one thing.

Seriously, how can you beat a cup of rosy lee and cake though to stop and relax. Be it to have a gossip with mates or grab a precious few minutes to yourself and ponder on life. For as Thomas De Quincey said (a literary type best known for writing *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, so true, often off his face but he got this one right that's for sure) "Happiness comes in with the tea-tray".



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RE-CYCLE

Africa benefits from the wizard behind the wheels



In life one thing follows another and here's how the enjoyment of 'a pint' over a decade ago has lead to over 1600 bicycles now be-

ing ridden and maintained by some of Africa's poorest people. The tale starts when the hero of the story, Merlin, was a student at the London school of Economics in the early '90s. As some of us will remember student days are often lean days and a part time job during this period can make a difference between a 'wild weekend' or staying in swatting. No contest! Merlin's ears pricked up when, through the Student's Union, he heard about a certain German student called Dr Bike repaired student's bikes in return for beer. Merlin became an apprentice cycle repairman and took on the title Nurse Bike. Time, experience, expertise - Merlin graduated to Doctorship himself. He became aware of just how good he was with a bike when a lady from Haiti personally asked his advice on how to start up a bicycle factory on her Caribbean island. This led to a chance meeting with an American charity out there who suggested he collect old bikes back in

England and they'd sort out transport etc. to the poor in South Africa. So things progressed and in 1997 RE-CYCLE was registered as a charity. Donated bikes poured in. Although it took 1 ½ years to get together, Merlin arranged with the Post Office to collect all their old bikes - previously they'd scrap them. These alone amounted to 2000-3000 per year. Over a coffee and organic carrot and apple juice at the Hatter, Merlin filled me in on the State of play today. RE-CYCLE's main depot is in Colchester, Essex. Their volunteers, young offenders and some on probation sort out all the incoming donated bikes. Handlebars are straightened and pedals are taken off so that 40ft-shipping containers can be packed to the max. Cycles that are past it are stripped of any useful spare parts. These plus useful repair tools are shipped out too, so recipients can maintain their gifts. Aid agencies and charities already working with the poor of Africa ensure their bikes go to the needy. Often undernourished people who are spending four hours a day in the heat walking to schools, field, or simply to get water. It's either that or spending a ¼ of their income on local transport. The donated

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If you want to advertise or you got a story give us a call or ask at the counter

Dave's new eco- *MH*Monthly

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bikes must be comparable to us getting our first car. Their lives would be made much easier.

As well as the main base in Colchester, a small office in London, Merlin is starting up in Brighton, using office space at the Peace and Environment centre in Surrey Street (opposite Brighton Train Station).

Its early days here at the mo, and he's definitely not ready for old bikes yet but says that help—either financial or physical - is much appreciated.

If you want you want a free blueprint of how to make a load bearing trailer for your own machine, or you just want to find out more, the visit their website, www.re-cycle.org [or it might be, www.recycle.org]

*MH*Monthly crystal

Topaz, Sagittarius.

Topaz is an 'electric' mineral. This stone is not only good the outer eyes but the inner as well and its use can cut through self-limiting beliefs. One of the hardest gems it can grow in to huge crystals, some several hundred pounds in weight. It also comes in many colours. Its energy works through the cosmic law of attraction and manifestation as like tourmaline, it contains positive and electrical currents. Uses the manifestation of health, restoration of loss of senses of taste and mending of wounds and skin eruptions.

Cup o' Cha

There's more to tea, writes Monica Perdoni

Good advice. A cha break, a brew and a stew over the day's events: tea is more than just a refreshing drink. It means time out, it means friendship, it's a soothing ritual in itself. The Eas-tenders panacea for every traumatic event from murder to the state of Pat's earrings has got to be "I'll stick the kettle on".

Tea was first discovered, ancient legend has it, in 2737 BC when the leaves from a wild tea bush happened to blow into a pan of boiling water belonging to scholar and herbalist Shen Nung who spread the word. A Chinese Emperor too, PR couldn't have been an issue here.

Flavanoids are the magical property found in black and green tea. A rich source of antioxidants, they

help fight free radicals, the baddies responsible for weakening the immune system, premature ageing and the onset of chronic diseases. The recommended daily quota is three cups. Even one cup can help reduce the risk of tooth decay. How? Through the production of stimulating saliva which stops plaque forming doh! Green tea is world renowned for its anti-oxidant properties and health benefits. For the Queen Bee of the leaves though the white tea rules in potency.

There are six main types of tea: black, green, white, oolong, scented and compressed, which all originate from the tea plant *camellia sinensis*. How they are picked and processed determines the type of tea finally produced. A major concern in the fight for fair trade are the wages of

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British Food?

Matt tucks in to The Blue Man's banquet

The question of the day appears to be; sex or food? Or it is in this month's *Observer Food Monthly*. For me, there's no debate. There's a good argument to be made for saying that all our problems as a nation stem from our, at best, disrespectful, and at worst, down right ignorant, relationship to food. In no other culture could the concept of the TV dinner be taken so literally as ours. Superficially satisfying, ready at the touch of a button and requiring three muscles to prepare, the typical British dinner is a disaster. And from it stem all our social ills. Murderous hoodies, coastal erosion, secular public transport, you name it, Britain's got it and we could stop it all today if we'd only sit down together once a week and eat.

Well I'm sick of it, so off I set, with as many friends as I could muster, to the Blue Man, on Edward Street. It being a Tuesday night, we got a table for two no

problem, but woe betide any lovebirds that try for a Friday night unannounced, such is the popularity of this little gem of a restaurant. North African cuisine of the highest calibre, I'm assured by my half Moroccan friend, in a setting reminiscent of that bejewelled den of iniquity of popular fantasy, the Sultan's bazaar. And to cap it all, you can Bring Your Own. What more could a sex starved patriot want? Well how about traditional minced lamb pastry rolls with yoghurt and spicy salsa? No? Maybe a jamboree of feta, artichoke hearts and fresh basil filo parcels? Madam, surely you wouldn't turn your nose up at goat tagine with turmeric, vegetables and baked herb dumplings? What? You're insane! Unless, that is, you agree to submit to the seductive art of the grilled fresh fig with hot ice cream and ginger honey. Ahh, I thought as much. Don't worry, the war will be over by Christmas.

The Blue Man, Edward Street, Kemp Town, 01273 622885

Backgammon - Tuesday nights at the Hatter. £2 entry £50 for the winner. Starts at 7.00 pm

Norris

You need more than 8 legs to catch up with him...



Not so long ago, Norris, the Hatter's pet spider set off on a spiderdelic journey

Greetings warmly to all at the Hatter in the OM Stone universe. My name is ISHTAR and I write to you on behalf of Norris. He bids me to inform you that both he and Spinetta now dwell in caves in this world's Golden Ranges. They meditate in the white mountain - far, far away from

where I transmit this message.

As an agent for the Lite Master, of whom you were made aware in a previous missive from Norris, I am to tell you they are to absorb - more fully - certain light and sound frequencies that their consciousnesses absorbed recently. As a multi-dimensional agent I am grateful to be of use on this communication and to tell you that Norris will contact as soon as his awareness drops to our level.

'Yours Dutifully, ISHTAR