

TEA STORIES

Naomi Bulger



Is it tea time?

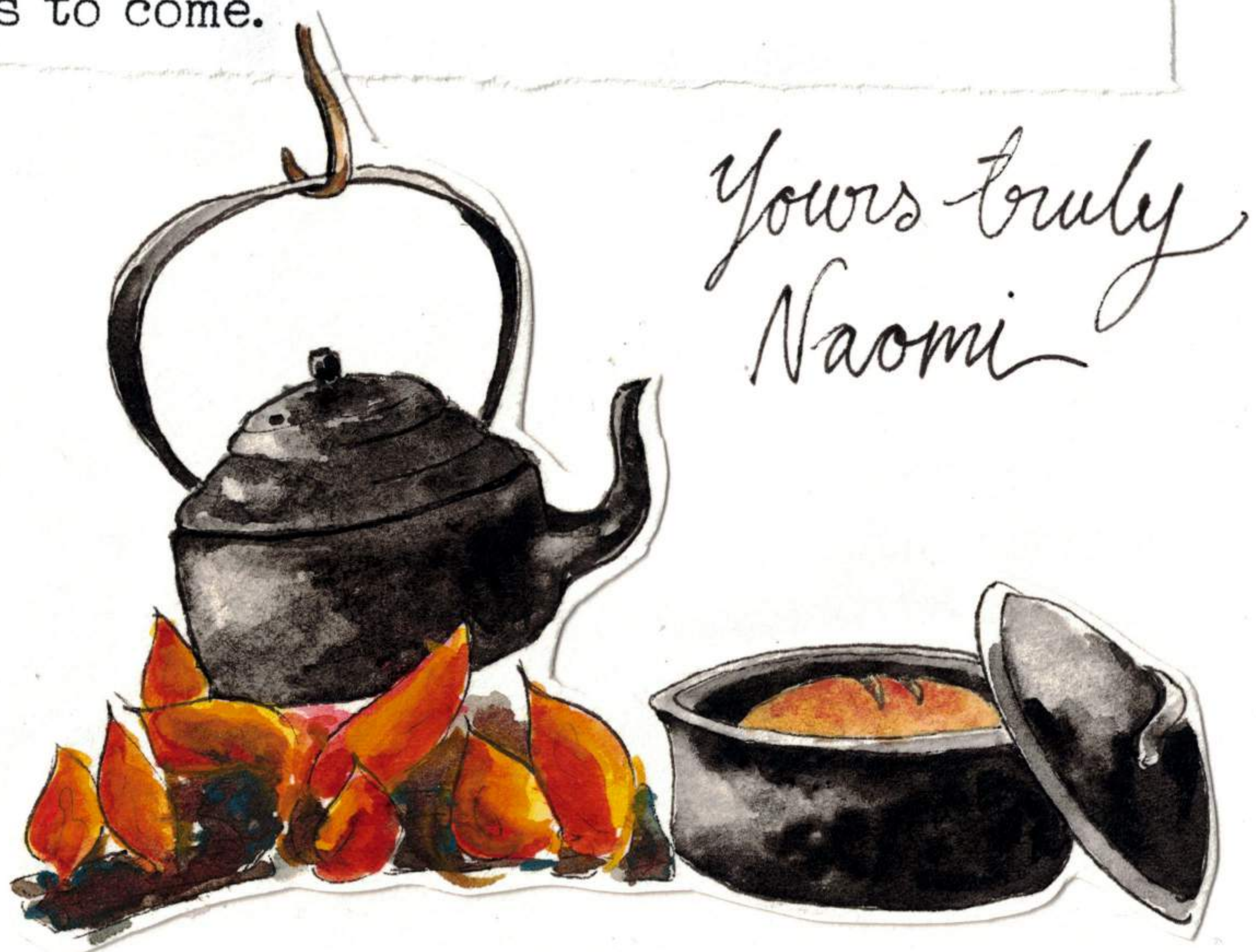
After I finished high school, I went to work in a nursing home. One of the residents would sit in the common dining area from about nine each morning, and call out at the top of her lungs, "I want a cup of tea!" If none was forthcoming, she'd call out again, "Cup-a-cup-a-cup-a-teeeeeeeea!" And if still no tea arrived, she'd begin singing: "Tea for two and two for tea / me for you and you for me..." She could keep this up all morning, often with nearby residents complaining about the noise (one woman would frequently demand, "Can you PLEASE shut Her Majesty UP?"), until at last the morning-tea tray arrived. I came home after my first week working in that nursing home and told my mother, "I've just discovered what you will be like when you're old."

As long as I can remember, tea has been a part of my life. Six years old, being allowed to have a cup of tea with Mum. She made it sweet and milky, in a real teacup that wobbled in the saucer. Powerfully strong billy-tea, brewed over an open fire and served with damper and cocky's joy, at a school holiday horse-riding camp when I was 12. A giant mug of tea first thing every morning at my friend Deborah's

house, standing in my PJs in front of her ancient wall-heater, during that winter's week I stayed with her while on a work conference. The endless cups of tea I made for a boyfriend's family, many moons ago, after his grandfather passed away. Not knowing what to say or how to help, I showed my compassion through black tea and biscuits. The fortifying, heartwarming tea in a paper cup that a nurse brought me while I sat in the ED, waiting for a doctor to glue my little boy's head back together.

There are a million tea-stories that punctuate the moments in my life, both miniscule and momentous, shared and alone. And when I asked my friends and community to share their tea stories, I learned that the ties that bind us - to one another and to this ancient drink - are as common as the ways to drink tea are varied.

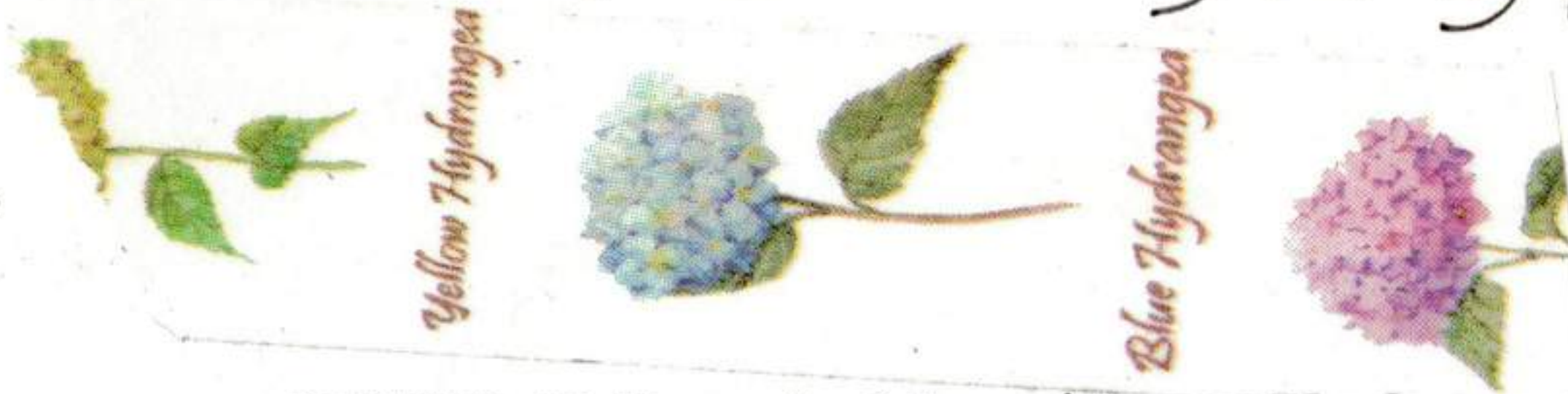
This little zine is a celebration of all our tea-stories, and hopefully of many more brews to come.



*Yours truly
Naomi*

An origin story

(but nobody really knows...)



In the year 2737 BC, while the Chinese Emperor Shen Nung was sitting beneath a camellia sinensis tree, some leaves from the tree blew into the pot of water that his servant was boiling for drinking. A renowned herbalist*, the Emperor decided to try the accidental infusion and in doing so, discovered tea.



* Shen Nung was also known as the 'father' of Chinese medicine and pharmacology. He wrote the treatise "On Herbal Medical Experiment Poisons" and was said to have tasted and tested 365 different herbs. They were not all as beneficial as tea, and he died from a toxic overdose.

Tea in bed

"My darling husband brings me a cup of tea every morning. We sit in bed together drinking our Real tea-leaf Tea. Enjoying the togetherness, romantic, until B/N G he turns on the tele and the peace is shattered." Julie Rowe

Tea with Grandpa

"I am the only tea drinker in a family of coffee worshippers. My grandpa made me my first tea when I was little and through the years he continued to do so, because I was hooked. Last December he was 94 and in palliative care and I sat next to his bed through days and nights, supported by nurses who brought me so many cups of tea. I miss our moments and regularly sit outside with a cup of tea, thinking of him." Maria

Playing Ladies

"When I was a little girl, my sisters and I would play 'Ladies' with a pot of tea and cheese sandwiches. We would use our mum's 1970s glass coffee pot and the tiny matching glass cups with red plastic saucers."

M

The magic canister

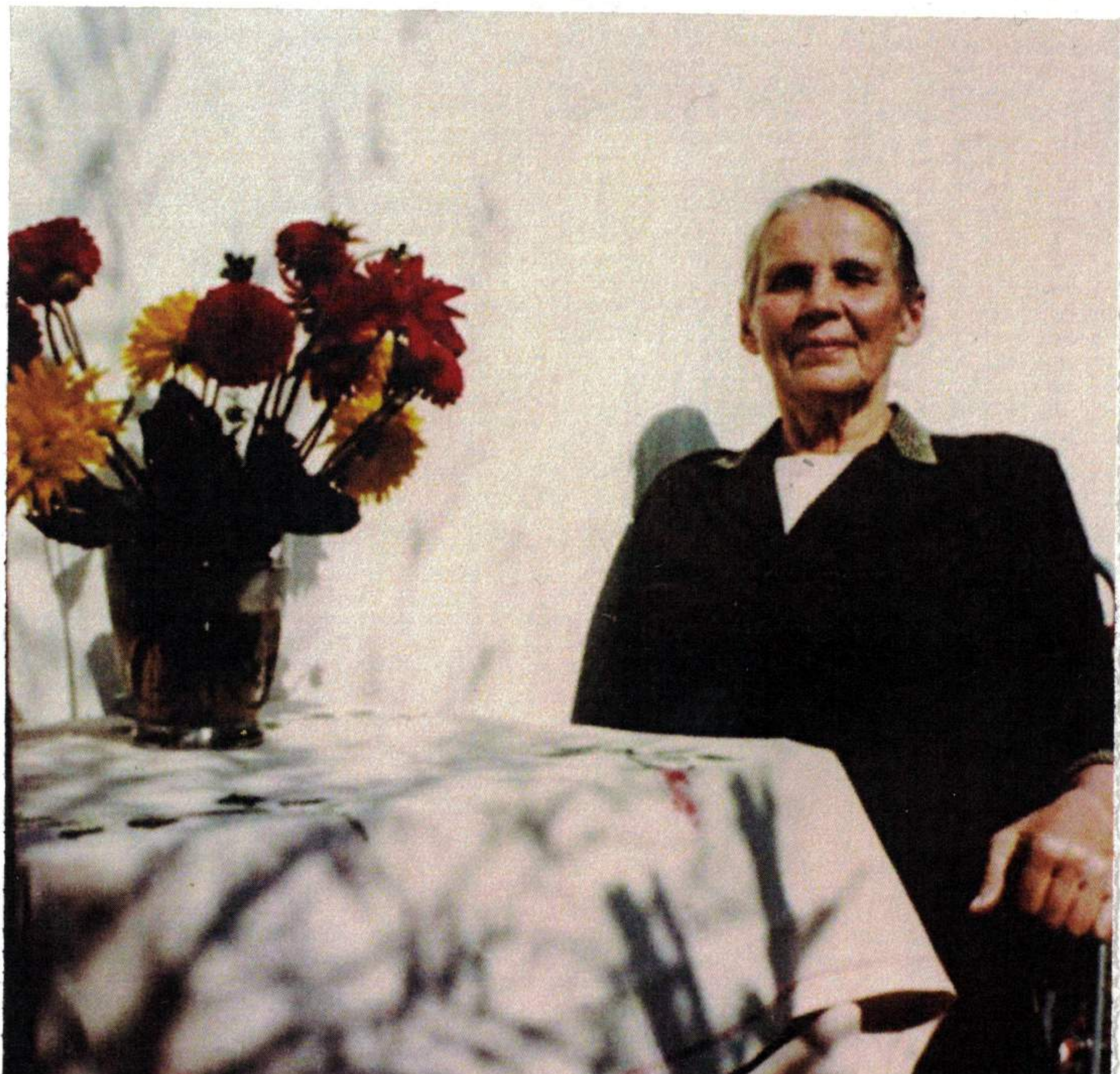
"I never realised how important tea was to me until I moved away from home. Anytime we had visitors stop by, the first thing we did was offer a cup of tea and a bite to eat. We would always have jasmine tea and it was my job to prepare the teapot and place the leaves inside. Oddly, our tea canister was always full. I don't ever remember having to go shopping to replace it. It was as though the more hospitality we showed, the more blessed we were and plentiful our house was. When I am alone, if I have a cup of jasmine tea, I feel like a whole community of people are with me."

Margie



"Good, good"

"I can't imagine a day that doesn't start with a cup of tea. It's a drink that runs through the veins of the UK and has been an unquestioned part of my life for as long as I can remember. Putting the kettle on is the countdown to relaxation even for five minutes. My Babcia (Polish grandmother) spoke very little English but when I was at her house would present me with a large mug of milky tea laced with large amounts of honey, saying 'good, good' to emphasise the health properties." Sally Proser



← "As a refugee who had been driven from her house and country and survived many dangers, simple comforts like a hot tea were very precious to her."

Tea advent

"I had a tight group of friends in college. Twelve of us lived together in a big, decrepit house and called ourselves the Grand Old Ladies. Each holiday season, to keep in touch, I ask them all to send me a box of their favourite tea bags. I mix them up, sort them into 24 tiny, hand-decorated envelopes for each person, and then mail them back an assortment. Each day during advent, we all open a tiny, numbered envelope and enjoy a cup of tea that reminds us of one of our friends."

Emily Weissman



(Can we please just pretend these mistakes are Ye Olde ink blots?) →

First ad for tea in England

Mercurius Politicus,

COMPRISING

The sum of Foreign Intelligence, with
the Affairs now on foot in the Three Nations

OF

ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, & IRELAND.

For Information of the People.

— *Ita vertere Series* { Horat. de
Ar. Poet.

From Thursday Septemb. 23. to Thursday Septemb. 30. 1658.

Advertisements

A Bright bay Gelding stolen from *Masfeld*, in the County of *Hertsford*, Sept. 23. of about 14 hand high or something more, with half his Mane shorn and a star in the Forehead, and a feather all along his Neck on the far side. A young man with grey cloaths of about twenty years of age, middle stature, went away with him. If any can give notice to the Porter at *Salisbury house* in the Strand, or to the White Lion in *Masfeld aforesaid*, they shall be well rewarded for their pains.

→ That Excellent, and by all Physicians approved, China Drink, called by the Chinese, *Tché*, by other Nations *Tay* alias *Tee*, is sold at the *Sultanness-head*, a *Coffee-house* in *Sweetings Rents* by the *Royal Exchange*, London. ←

"That Excellent, and by all physicians approved, China Drink, called by the Chinese, *Tché*, by other Nations *Tay* alias *Tee*, is sold at the *Sultanness-head*, a *Coffee-house* in *Sweetings Rents* by the *Royal Exchange*, London."

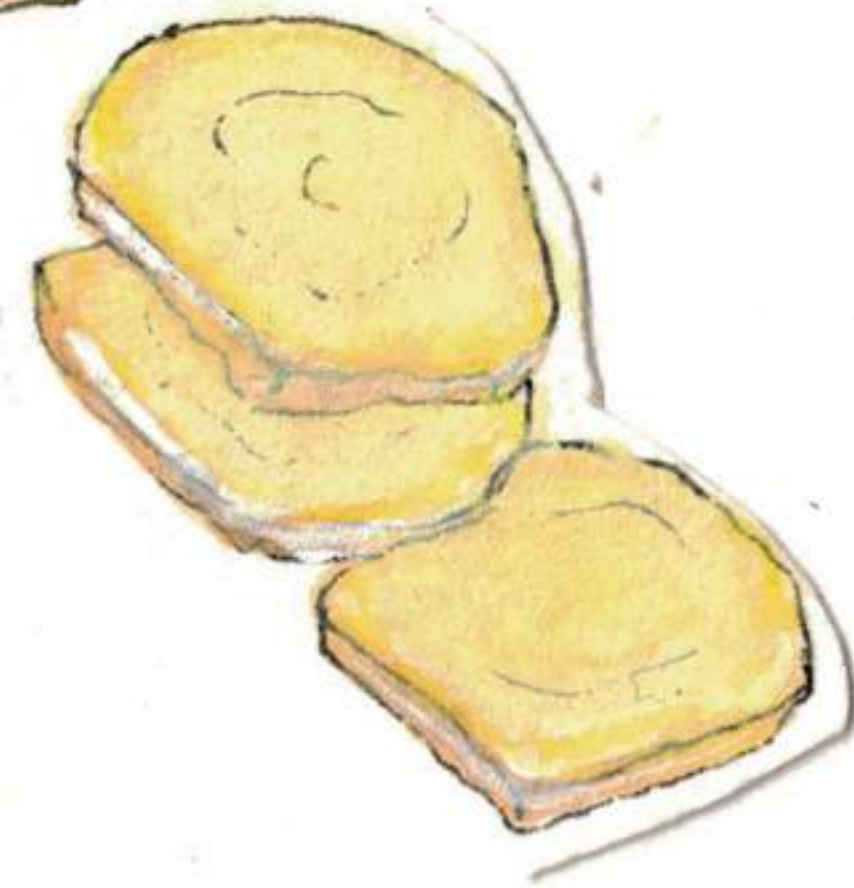
Mercurius Politicus, Sept 1658

Soothing

"I have an autoimmune condition that affects my stomach, so ginger tea and

peppermint tea are a godsend. It's lovely to spend some time gently sipping my cup of tea, soothing my soul as well as my stomach."

N



Ode to Tea



Had a good day?
Celebrate with tea.

Had a bad day?
Have a cup of tea to make
myself feel better.

I collect teas from any
overseas travel I do, and
these ones always end up
being the special ones I
drink when I need a pick-
me-up or just want to keep a
really good day or moment
going.

Kath

Tea-mail

TEA-BAGS TUCKED INTO LETTERS, POSTED TO ME

POSTED



FROM VIBEKE IN DENMARK

↑ FROM ATHISYA IN MALAYSIA

✦ FROM ELIZABETH IN THE USA

✦ FROM EMILIA IN FINLAND





↑ FROM CAMILLA IN NORWAY



Net Wt 1.6g
e (0.05oz)



↑ FROM KATHERINE IN AUSTRALIA

Heartwarming

"My son broke his collarbone and while the two of us were waiting to see the doc, my favourite friend came for a visit and brought me tea (and a treat for my son). It was lovely and kind and heartwarming. She sat and kept us company until we were called in and I cherish

the memory of the time she spent with us."
Amy



"I NEVER COULD GET
OVER HOW MY MUM
WOULD HAVE A REFR-
ESHING CUP OF HOT
TEA ON A REALLY
HOT DAY." Judith

Oh Judith - my mum
would do this too. She'd say
"The tea makes me perspire
and that cools my body down,"
and then I'd say, "Mum you
are CRAZY. Pass the icy-poles."
Love, Naomi



A SIMPLE EQUATION FOR
Earl Grey tea

Black tea + bergamot oil =
Earl Grey tea

Earl Grey tea + short
steeping time =
the appearance and taste
of dirty dishwater

Earl Grey tea + longer
steeping time =
nectar of the gods

Talk and talk

"My father is passionate about tea, and he always used to bring me a cup at night when each member of our family was doing their thing, in their respective rooms but somehow still together. I've moved out, but when I go back, we always stay at the kitchen table the first night, with a cup of tea. The balcony door is open, the fresh air of the night coming in, the warm light of the lamp, and we talk and talk, just the two of us." Sophia



Tears

"Almost five years ago now, the sweetest obstetrician offered me a cup of tea after I gave birth to my daughter... I couldn't stop crying, partly because of the excitement and partly because of the most overwhelming happiness I had ever felt, and the memory of this cup of tea still brings tears to my eyes." Maria

Kindness and gratitude

"The ceremony of making tea has played a central role in my life. Growing up, everyone and anyone who ever entered our house was given a cup of tea. My mother always laid a tray out, complete with china cups, jug and sugar bowl, and lace doilies. If you were in luck you might get one of her nice buns (fairy cakes) with them. I have tried to carry on this tradition and like to think of making someone tea as a special act of kindness and gratitude." Margie

Escape



Living in Bangkok is busy, really busy! People are EVERYWHERE: eight million or so of them. The malls have a steady stream of bodies always shopping, the streets are lined with vendors that take up most of the walkways, and the roads are massively congested.

Sitting in a tuk tuk, an open-air local taxi ride, you feel and breathe in the pollution. Add to this the humidity and you have yourself a well-balanced 'I need to escape this insanity' cocktail.

So can you imagine the thrill experienced when we had stumbled upon a little gem, a tea house, hidden within this chaotic city.

The Elysian Tea House finds the root of its name etched within Greek history. And history is where you will be lead to, once your frazzled nerves settle.

In the Brereton Room, the weight of calmness actually begins to filter through my soot-covered pores. I lean forward, straining to hear the chaos outdoors, but it is not there. On my right there is a novel with the name Ernest Hemingway printed on the spine. As I flip through the pages of the book, my eyes capture the following: "Make your life noteworthy."

Our waiter arrives and serves us an array of bottles to sample the aromas of the various tea-leaves. I need to cool down so I opt for the Elysian Ice Tea, a blend of watermelon topped with black tea. Ray opts for a jasmine black tea that is well paired with a selection of desserts.

Across the room is a large window. The light filters through, bringing a sense of airiness to the room yet tempting you to wander out to enjoy the garden terrace. I slumber into my thoughts.

” Natasha

Tossing the Cup*

Performed by 18th-century "spae-wives" in the Scottish highlands, and popularised by Victorian ladies in posh drawing-rooms... it's the reading of tea-leaves...

The cup is turned upside-down (hence "tossing") to get rid of drips, then swirled to create a pattern in the leftover tea leaves.



* (Also known as "tasseography")

HOW TO READ YOUR TEA-LEAVES

1. Make a pot of tea (with loose leaves, not tea bags)
 2. Choose a nicely rounded tea cup with a handle, and a saucer
 3. Pour the tea without using a strainer
 4. Drink the contents of the cup, leaving the tea leaves behind
 5. Holding the handle of the cup in your left hand, silently ask your question
 6. Swirl the cup counter-clockwise, three times
 7. Carefully invert the cup over the saucer, leaving it long enough to let the liquid drain away
 8. Turn your cup back up the right way
 9. Look into the teacup and see if any shapes or groups of leaves catch your attention.
- Don't think too hard. Follow your intuition.
- ...



THE HANDLE...

Represents you (or the person you are reading for). Start your reading at the handle then move clockwise around the cup.

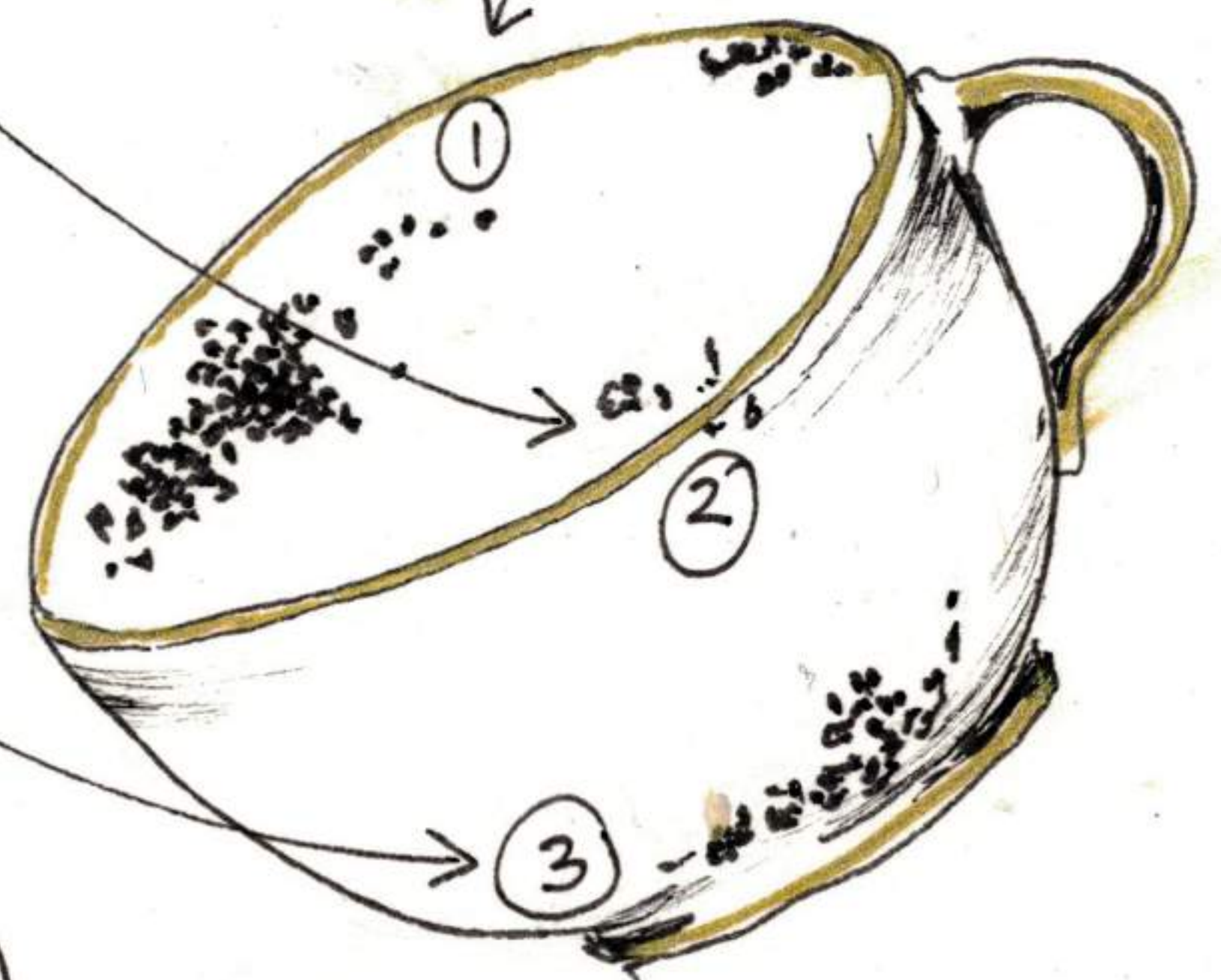
- * Any shapes or groups CLOSE TO THE HANDLE describe things affecting you in the present
- * Anything to the LEFT OF THE HANDLE is in the past
- * Anything to the RIGHT OF THE HANDLE is in the immediate future

THE CUP...

① Symbols near the rim OR top third of the cup will occur within days

② Symbols in the middle third of the cup are in the near future

③ Symbols in the bottom third are in the distant future



(The closer any of these are to the handle, the sooner they will occur)

AN A-Z OF TEA SYMBOLS

for the next time you toss the cup

ANGEL =



Good news (especially in love)



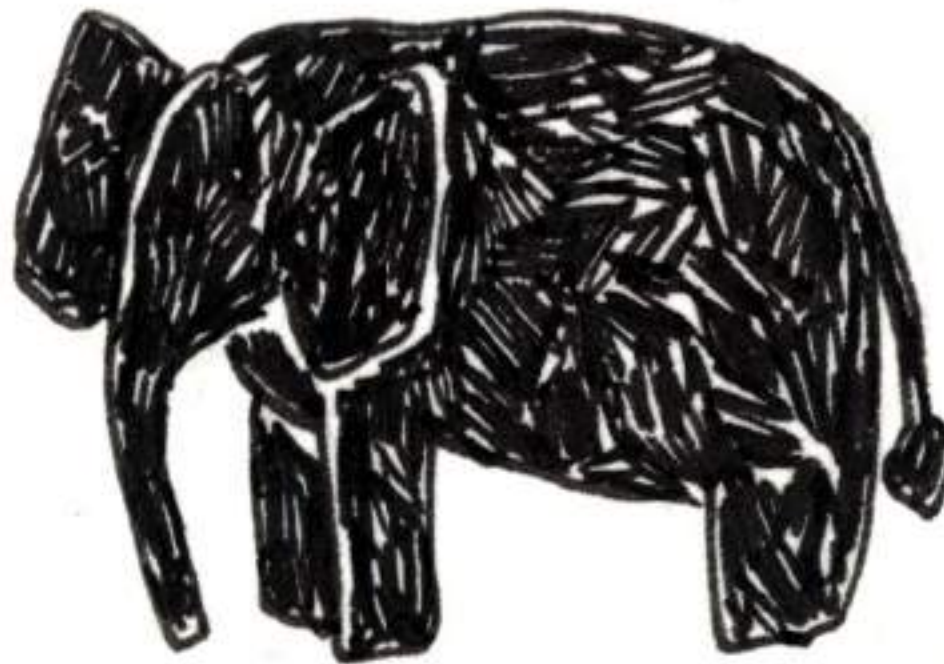
BOAT =
A visit from a friend

CANDLE =



enlightenment

ELEPHANT =



Luck and good health

FOX =



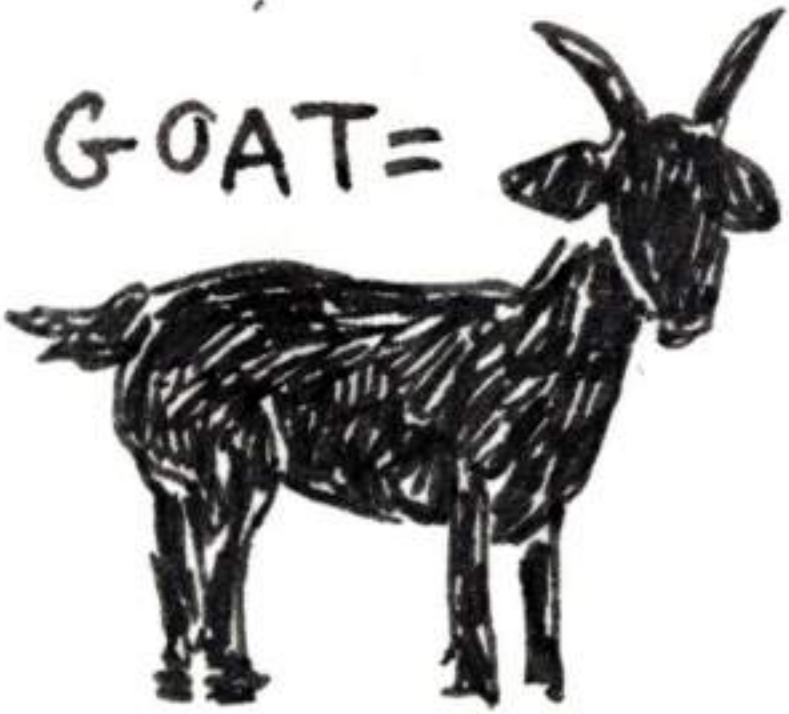
Backstabbing from a close friend

Large + sudden changes

DRAGON =



GOAT =



Enemies!

HAMMER =



Challenges overcome



IVY =

Friendship will be tested but unbroken

JUG =



Abundance and enjoyment

KETTLE =



Death

Travel



LADDER =

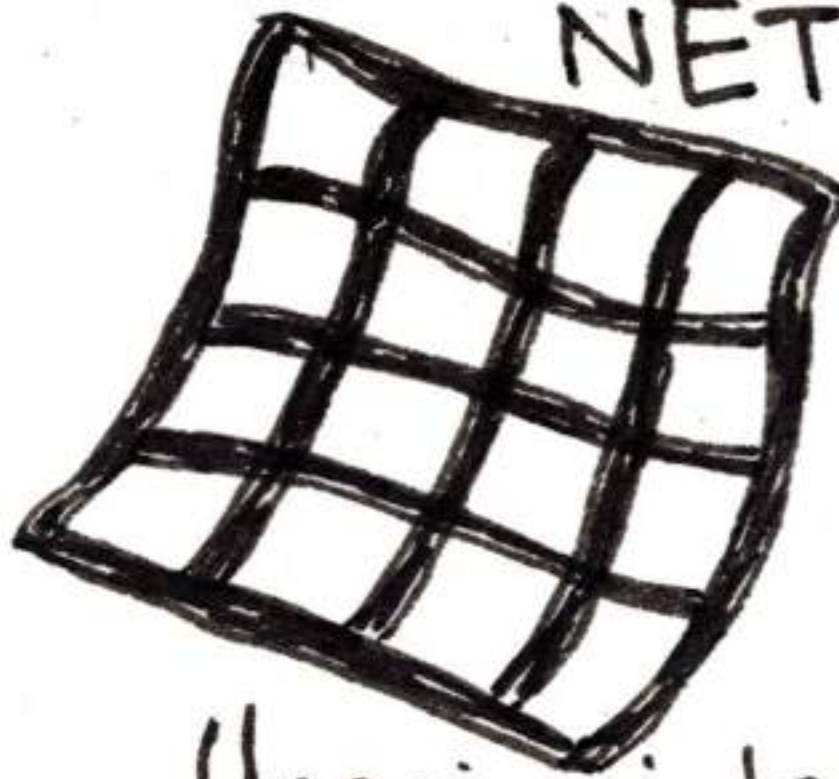


MUSHROOM =



A sudden separation of lovers following a fight

NET =



Unprincipled people around you

OWL =



Unlucky event (like sickness, poverty or deceit)

PEAR =



Wealth, social status



QUAVER =

Need for silence or a rest



RABBIT =

Success in a city

SQUARE =



Comfort and peace

TREE =



Good luck, prosperity + happiness

UNICORN =



Scandal



VOLCANO =

Anger, or mounting tension

WHEEL =



Inheritance

YOKE =



Hard toil

ZEBRA =



Good times for two people



A magic elixir

"For the past 50+ years I have had the company of a lovely cup of tea to start each day. Through life's ups and downs, this has been a steady ritual, sometimes sipped in traffic on the way to work, but mostly willing me to rise early, sip as I wake, gather the day, set intentions, and feel the glow. Tea is a magic elixir, which besides being used to start the day, is best shared with a friend over conversation and nibbles." Sigrid

With honey

"I am the regular hot tea drinker in my family and often drink alone, starting each day with a hot cup of tea with a teaspoon of honey. The honey from my father's bees. Recently we discovered a new bubble tea place closer to our home. Now our Saturdays begin with a family walk, followed by lunch and then a treat - a large cup of sweet bubble tea. My husband and daughter prefer the milk teas, my son and I the fruit teas." Kiriaki

A nurse's intuition

"Two weeks ago, sitting with my grandson in the paediatric intensive care, grief-stricken and uncertain, 2000 miles away from my home, it's amazing how a kindly nurse's intuition of what tea-time is, presenting me with a simple cup of chamomile to ease my tensions... how amazing that was.

When there's nothing anyone can do or say, a cup of tea truly does work wonders."

Sara



The cup that is good for...

"For me, tea has helped mend broken hearts, dry up tears, heal a toothache (with some whiskey added), soothe the shock of losing a loved-one, lift me up when I feel down, celebrate the joy of four beautiful babies, cure a hangover, warm cold hands, calm my nerves, wake me up, allow me a moment of peace. I have witnessed difficult conversations being broached while someone

'busied' themselves making tea, seen old enemies become friends, and listened to endless stories and tales from people who nursed cups of this precious brown liquid in their



hands. As soon as my kids could boil a kettle, I taught them how to make tea for me. And I think that is probably one of the most valuable skills they have learnt." Margie

Tisanes



Echinacea



Rosehip

Herbal
Teas



Elderflower



Peppermint



Chamomile



Cornflower



Jasmine



Lemon Balm



Dandelion



Blessed Thistle



Chrysanthemum

Mum's teapot

"Mum always has a teapot on the go, a stainless-steel one. The lid's on a hinge and has a little black knob on top. Tea of course is made from tea leaves kept in a wooden box with a sliding lid, and is scooped out with a frilly spoon, two scoops. Dad complains now when all us kids are home that there's never any tea in the pot, and threatens to go get the shearing-shed tea-pot, which holds many, many cups of tea. Tea reminds me of home and thinking about it makes me realise how many memories I have associated with tea!" Em Reynolds



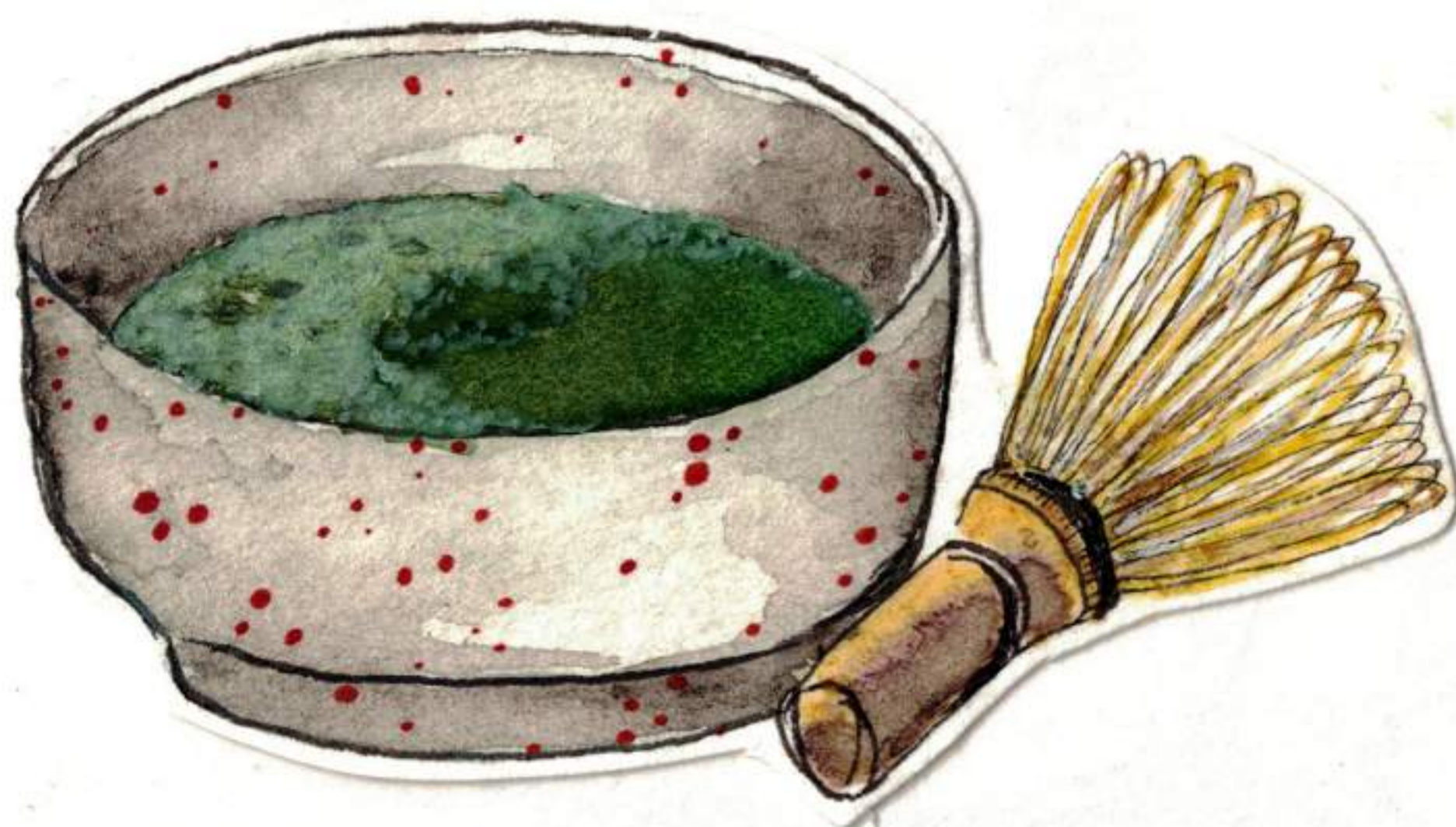
Japanese tea ceremonies

In the late 16th Century, tea-master Sen no Rikyu was considered the most influential historical figure in the development of the Japanese tea ceremony. He introduced the rustic, thatch-roofed 'wabi' tea room still used in Japan today, and established the etiquette of the modern tea ceremony, including the ordained procedure and the choice of utensils used.

How to host a tea ceremony

First, send out your invitations - chosen for their beauty - several weeks in advance.

Clean the room and pare back the contents, being mindful of the season. Then gather together your ingredients:



Matcha green tea powder
Hot water
A matcha whisk (chasen)
A teapot (kama)
Tea bowl (chashaku)
A silk cloth (fukusa)
Small napkins (kaishi)
A floral centrepiece (hana-ire)
Sweet foods (optional)
A bowl for washing hands

here's what happens next

- * Invite your guests into the tea-room
- * Everyone washes their hands
- * Formally acknowledge each guest
- * Offer sweets
- * Bring out your tea-set + ritually cleanse the tools
- * Make the KOICHA (thick) matcha by blending 3 tsp matcha with 1 cup hot water, then knead with the whisk
- * Pass the tea-bowl to each guest for a sip, cleaning the bowl with a fukusa or kaishi between each guest
- * Clean the bowls and tools
- * Make the USUCHA (thin) matcha: blend 1 tsp matcha with 1 cup hot water, then whisk until frothy
- * Pass the bowl for your guests to sip in turn
- * Offer sweets again at this point
- * Clean the bowls and tools for the final time
- * Bow to each guest as they depart



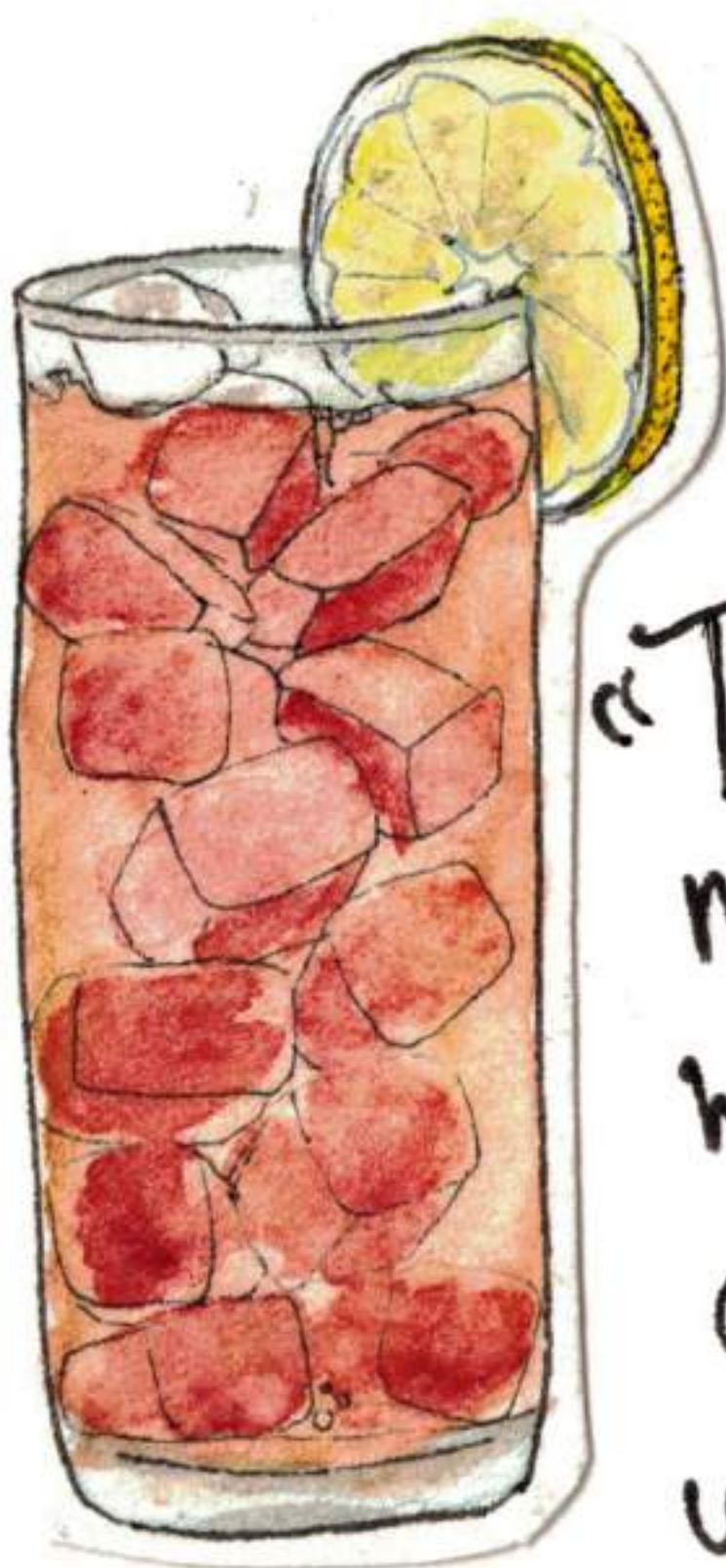
Green tea story

"As a 15-year old recently returned from a short exchange program in Japan, I was yearning to find anything to remind me of the country I had fallen in love with. I learned of a local woman who taught Japanese to older students, and she agreed to make green tea for me and talk about Japan. I was excited as I'd not had the opportunity to try green tea in Japan. Unsure what to expect, I took my first sip. And was horrified! It was strong, bitter almost. I wondered how this drink could be so beloved by Japanese. Reluctantly I drank it all, not daring to express my disappointment and disgust in it.

I didn't dare try green tea again for a few years. When I eventually did, I loved it! I discovered that like so many things, green tea comes in many styles, some subtle, some with great depth. I realised that first drink was of matcha tea. Of course it was strong! Green tea remains my go-to favourite tea and now I seek it out when I travel. If only my younger self would've known this, I may not have stayed away from it for so long." Kim

Feelings of yesteryear

"My grandmother introduced me to hot Lipton tea at a very young age in the 1950s. It's a warm memory that always brings warm feelings of yesteryear."
Nancy



Tea time

"Tea time has been many things for me over the decades. Early morning wake-ups with espresso chai, afternoon meditations and wake up with some more, evening reflection with earl grey and milk, nighttime relaxation and sleep preparation with valerian sleepytime." Sara

Hashtags

#homeisacupoftea

#onequietcup

#teastories

#cupsinframes

#adoremycupoftea

#todaymytea

#teajournal

#teaformeplease

#timefortea





China tea

"A highlight of my trip to China last year with my two thirteen-year-old grandsons, was a tea ceremony at a tea shop. The hostess gracefully engaged us in the lore of tea, tasting and learning the benefits of each sample. They surprised me by their enthusiasm and we had fun choosing different teas to take home to their mothers. The tea theme continued for the whole two weeks as they searched for their favourite teas."

Becky



Keep calm and drink tea

cc
On Sunday mornings I usually look forward to a lovely, slow start drinking tea, listening to the birds (still in jamis of course!) and planning the day, which usually involves a beach walk and gardening.

However, a 'solstice festival' was recently held in the hills just above our small township. It started 6pm Saturday - a thumping sub-woofer-and-drums kind of festival, complete with amplification ... 15 hours later it was still going! Suffice to say there was very little sleep in our township that night.

I could only think MAKE A CUP OF TEA! However, the neighbour's dog was barking and howling so I went to try to calm him down. The neighbour yelled something about 'no sleep' and stormed inside. Later, she sent an apologetic text.

After nine in the morning the noise finally stopped, and I was able to enjoy a peaceful cuppa. That quiet cup of tea had never tasted ^{so} good! I baked some cookies and took a plate over to my neighbour, with a note (and my favourite quote): 'Drink tea and stay calm.' » Jen



Cha Ching

TRANS: 'THE CLASSIC OF TEA'

"Tea tempers the spirits and harmonises the mind, dispels lassitude and relieves fatigue, awakens thought and prevents drowsiness, lightens or refreshes the body, and clears the perceptive faculties."

FROM THE WORLD'S FIRST
'TEA BOOK', BY LU YU,
WRITTEN APPROX. 760-780 AD

Mother's Milk

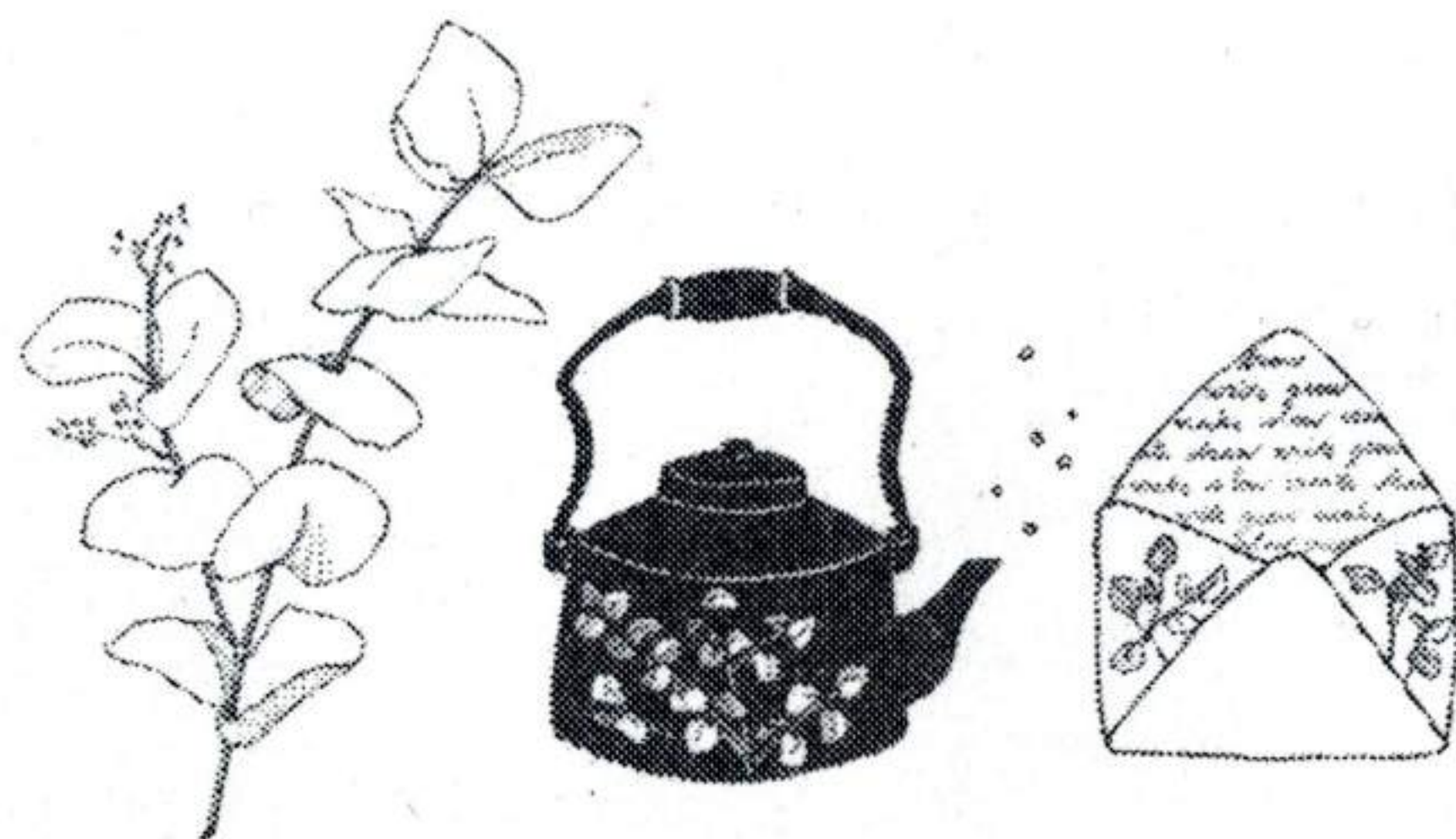
"My Nanna called tea 'Mother's Milk' and delighted in pouring a little puddle of milky tea onto a saucer for me to slurp up. Of course it was loaded with sugar - so I guess that sealed the deal."

Cafe



Memory Revivor

"Tea is comfort in a cup, but it is ^{also} always a great memory revivor. I lived in Saudi Arabia for a few years and became addicted to the hot, sweet, mint tea in tiny, thin-walled and beautifully decorated glasses. It was different to the tea of home but yet so comforting when I was missing my parents and friends. Now I drink it for comfort, and to remember the amazing and beautiful people and places of my past in that beautiful country." Michelle



NAOMI LOVES
naamiloves.com