



# TEA

Wine's Sober Sibling

MARIËLLA ERKENS



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# PREFACE

“Why would you want to serve tea with food?

It is a question I am often asked, and it is usually followed by, “after all, there is nothing better than wine to pair with food. That is what we have done for centuries.” Well, sure. That is the general consensus in the Western part of the world. However, in Eastern countries people have been drinking tea with their meals for thousands of years for the very same reason, so why not accept both possibilities?

That is what I did a decade ago and I am very happy I did, as it enriched my life as a whole and my meals in particular. It also broadened my professional scope. In 2010, while working as a chef, I visited a wholesale store to buy produce, and was invited to join a workshop on single origin tea and food pairing.

Before then, I had no idea about the endless possibilities of tea, and like most people I knew, I drank tea out of habit. That afternoon completely changed my thoughts about tea. I was awestruck by how tea could taste and how wonderfully it could enhance food. I started reading as much as I could about tea and signed up for a three-year tea sommelier course at the International Tea and Coffee Academy in the Netherlands. Gradually, I started to do more tea training and consultation work. After four years, my professional cooking career took more and more of a backseat. Nowadays, I only cook for pleasure.

I am also a teacher, with a speciality in tea and food pairing, at various institutions, so I decided to bundle all of the knowledge that I have gained over the years into a handbook. Although, I realize that my knowledge does not even remotely start to cover all that there is to know about tea.

All of this information can be rather overwhelming for someone new to tea, so I have included a variety of experiments, tips and examples in this book to help you along the way. This will give you the tools for putting your newly found knowledge into practice. There is a section with over 60 recipes, each with matching tea advice in three categories: budget tea, specialty tea and high-end tea. Most of the recipes have options for a vegetarian or vegan alternative. In the appendix you will also find lists of examples of tea and food combinations without recipes. In addition, there are pairings with cheese and chocolate, recipes for tea cocktails and descriptions of the most common teas and their tasting notes.

This book is for people with various levels of knowledge. It is for anyone, from beginners to advanced tea lovers, tea connoisseurs, chefs, amateur chefs, sommeliers, food lovers, and anyone looking for the best options for non-alcoholic alternatives to wine. It is also a highly practical handbook for people in the catering and hospitality sector, and it can be used in hospitality training courses.

All knowledge starts with a theory, but practice makes perfect. Understanding tea is so much more than theory, and you will really learn to appreciate it by tasting it, as often as possible, prepared in different ways. After all, the proof is in the pudding.

# INTRODUCTION

Let us be honest, to most people, steeping tea generally means absentmindedly dunking tea bags in piping hot, tap water, which has been boiled several times already and as such acquiring a flat, unpleasant flavor. Once the tea is ready for drinking, the very few flavors that do manage to break through the suffocating actions of calcium, magnesium and other dissolved solids, will get drowned in milk and sugar, and will never even get near our taste buds.

No wonder tea steeped like that tastes rather boring and always the same, and it is no surprise that most people drink it distractedly, gulping it down without paying any attention to what they are drinking. They think this is what tea is supposed to taste like, and one cannot blame them.

The fact is that most people simply do not know how a good cup of tea ought to be steeped. For this reason, the unique flavors of each tea will never get a chance to surface.

For those who do take the time, love and effort to discover tea's many possibilities, there is a world of delight to discover. Once you have the knowledge and you master skills, steeping your cup of tea will never be the same again, I can promise you that.

People often think that tea is a hassle, but it is just a matter of acquiring the proper knowledge, just like all those other things we are not familiar with yet.

For example, not so long ago, the average Westerner's knowledge about wine, tea and coffee was:

- Wine is red, or white, sometimes pink and it sparkles when there is a party.
- Tea should be taken with milk and sugar.
- Coffee is usually a powder which you dissolve in hot water and mix with milk and sugar.

Since then, our collective knowledge about wine and coffee has increased enormously, and many supermarkets now stock very high-quality coffee and wine. In general, people know the names of the most common wines and drink them regularly, just like they routinely order espresso, macchiato, cappuccino or caffè latte. Now it is tea's turn. Apart from the well-known teas, like English Breakfast, Earl Grey or green tea, there are thousands of different kinds of loose-leaf tea, in all sorts of qualities. Do not let this put you off, as there is no need to know them all. Buy yourself only

a few different types of tea, maybe five or six, in small quantities, about 50 g (or 2 oz) each, or buy a sample set. See which ones you like best and start from there.

You could even start with just one tea if that would be easier for you. All it takes is time and practice, and all that matters is your own opinion. There is no right or wrong. If you like a certain tea, then that is perfect, no matter the quality or flavor. If you do not like a certain tea, no matter how fancy or special, just do not drink it. Expensive tea (or wines, for that matter) do not automatically agree with everybody's taste buds. It is all a matter of personal taste, which needs to be discovered.

Considering the growing number of people who want to drink less alcohol or no alcohol at all, it is becoming increasingly necessary for restaurants to offer alcohol-free beverages to accompany and complement food. Soft drinks and water do not add anything to the food experience, in fact; they do the very opposite. Many chefs and sommeliers are now going out of their way to develop non-alcoholic cocktails, herbal mixes, hip lemonades and flavored waters. It is all quite creative, sure, but those drinks do not have the same effect on food as wine, beer and tea have.

## In short

Wine, beer or tea are the only good solutions for a complete flavor experience.

A combination of all three is also an option, of course. For those who do not drink alcoholic drinks, tea is the best alternative.

I have been working with tea and its distinctive flavors on a daily basis since 2010, tasting teas both with and without food and writing lots and lots of recipes. The grand total of these efforts is incorporated in this book. However, my suggestions are just that: suggestions, based on my taste. Consider this a handbook that will help you develop your own taste in tea and food pairing. Once you have tackled the basics, take it from there and start to develop your own style. Experiment, do the unexpected. The worst thing that can happen is a disappointing result. By using this book, you will learn how to bring the best out of tea, with or without food. Read on!



# SOME OF THE SIBLINGS UP AND CLOSE

## Examples of matching teas and wines



WHITE TEA	
Tea varieties	Grape varieties
CHINA	
<b>Bai Hao Yin Zhen</b> , Fujian, China; smooth, rich, creamy, sweet, vegetal, floral, sweets, fruity, grains; grass, hay, pink rose, vanilla, apricot, toasted brioche with apricot jam, S	<b>Torrontés Riojano</b> , Calchaqui Valleys, N-Argentina; smooth, neutral to dry, sweet, fruity, floral; apricot, peach, melon, honey, lily, white flowers, rose, S
<b>Bai Mudan</b> , Fujian, China; smooth, mellow, rich, later bright, sweet, floral, fruity, sweets, nutty, grains, honeysuckle, lily, peach, apricot, melon, honey, hay, toasted bread, M	<b>Roussanne</b> , Central Coast, California, U.S.A.; smooth, rich, silky, sweet, sour, fruit, floral; lanolin, apricot, pear, lemon, white flowers, almond, orange blossom, S
<b>Yue Guang Bai</b> , Yunnan, China; smooth, rich and bright, sweet, earthy, fruity, spices, floral, sweets, henna, caramel, wood, sweet tobacco, apricot, honeysuckle, honey, vanilla, L	<b>Viognier</b> , Yarra Valley, Australia; dry, rich and bright, sweet and sour, fruity, mineral, spices, floral, peach, apricot, green plum, red apple, rock, nutmeg, geranium, jasmine, honey, M-L
INDIA	
<b>Spicy White</b> , first flush, Kurseong valley, Darjeeling, India; dry, bright, crisp, sweet, bitter, floral, fruity, vegetal, herbaceous; white flowers, muscatel grape, capsicum, hay, M	<b>Silvaner d'Alsace</b> , trocken, Rheinhessen, Germany; dry, bright, fruity, vegetal, floral, citrus, grape, grass, white flowers, M
KENYA	
<b>White Whisper</b> , Silver Needle, Nyeri region, Kenya; smooth, bold, rich, later bright, sweet, vegetal, floral, fruity, nutty, grains; grass, honey suckle, peach, almond, toasted brioche, M	<b>Viognier</b> , N-Rhône, France; smooth, bold, bright, sweet, sour, fruity, floral, nutty, spices, nectarine, a hint of citrus, pineapple, mango, honeysuckle, rose, almond, anise, honey, M-L

GREEN TEA	
CHINA	
<b>Anji Bai Cha</b> , Zhejiang Province, China; smooth, rich, sweet, slightly sour, umami, dairy, floral, nutty, sweets, vegetal, fruity; butter, honey suckle, magnolia, macadamia nut, honey, snow peas, melon, citrus, strawberry jam, S-M	<b>Sémillon</b> , Bordeaux, France; smooth, dry, sour, bright, floral, fruity, nutty, grains, sweets; orange blossom, white flowers, honeysuckle, citrus, green apple, white peach, melon, lemon zest, a hint of nut, butter on toast, honey, beeswax, S
<b>Long Jing</b> , Zhejiang Province, China; smooth, rich, later a bit bright, round, creamy, sweet, umami, vegetal, fruity, grains, nutty, maritime; peas, corn, chestnut, raw courgette, toast, cookies, macadamia, oyster, M	<b>Melon de Bourgogne</b> , Muscadet, Bourgogne, France; dry, bright, fruity, floral, maritime, grains, nutty; pear, citrus, green apple, white flowers, shellfish, bread, almond, M

GREEN TEA	
Tea varieties	Grape varieties
CHINA	
<b>Bi Luo Chun</b> , Dong Shan, Jiangsu Province, China; smooth, rich, later dry and bright, sweet, slightly bitter, umami, vegetal, fruity, grains, nutty, spices, mineral; courgette, edamame, candied lemon, plum, toast, cookies, hazelnut, aniseed, flint, M	<b>Müller-Thurgau</b> , Willamette Valley, W-Oregon, USA; dry, bright, slightly sweet, light; fruity, floral, mineral, peach, citrus, rose, elderflower, flint, M
<b>Tai Ping Hou Kui</b> , Tai Ping County, Anhui Province, China; smooth, rich, later dry and bright, sweet, slightly bitter, umami, vegetal, fruity, nutty, herbaceous; peas, green beans, asparagus, green bell pepper, pear, guava, almond, a hint of eucalyptus, honey, M	<b>Sauvignon Blanc</b> , Marlborough, New Zealand; dry, bright, fruity, vegetal, herbaceous, floral; citrus, papaya, melon, green bell pepper, peas, asparagus, grass, elderflower, geranium, M
<b>Gunpowder</b> , Zhejiang Province, China; neutral-bright, dry, sweet, bitter, sour, fruity, floral, earthy, vegetal, herbaceous, grains, nutty, fruity, mineral, metal; citrus, lily, pot soil, wood, broccoli, sage, cookies, almonds, flint, smoke, steel, M-L	<b>Aligoté</b> , Burgundy, France; bright, dry, fruity, floral, herbaceous, mineral, metal; apple, citrus, unripe peach, white flower, sage, rosemary, smoke, steel, M-L
JAPAN	
<b>Sencha</b> , Kochi, Shikoku, Japan; smooth to dry, rich and bright, sweet, bitter, umami, vegetal, herbaceous, maritime, fruity; grass, spinach, cucumber, parsley, basil, seaweed, citrus, peach, melon, M	<b>Melon de Bourgogne</b> , Muscadet, Bourgogne, France; dry, bright, fruity, floral, maritime, grains, nutty; pear, citrus, green apple, white flowers, shellfish, bread, almond, M
<b>Hōjicha</b> , Tsukigase, Nara prefecture, Japan; roasted tea, smooth and dry, rich, sweet, umami, nutty, grains, fruity, vegetal, herbaceous, maritime, earthy; caramel, honey, toasted almond, filter coffee, toast, pear, roasted corn, fennel, seaweed, cedar wood, M	<b>Grillo</b> , Sicily, Italy; full, fruity, floral, nutty, mineral, maritime, herbaceous, citrus, peach, pear, melon, orange blossom, almond, thyme, honey, M
<b>Kamairicha</b> , Ureshino, Saga Prefecture, Japan; slightly dry, ends smooth and bright, sweet, slightly bitter, umami, floral, sweets, grains, vegetal, herbaceous, fruity, dairy; freesia, oatmeal cookies, asparagus, cucumber, parsley, melon, buttered toast, M-L	<b>Grauburgunder</b> , Baden-Württemberg, Germany; dry, full, vegetal, floral, fruity, nutty, dairy, honeysuckle, citrus, pear, pineapple, melon, almond, butter, M
<b>Gyokuro</b> , Fujieda, Shizuoka, Japan; smooth, rich, ends bright and dry, umami, sweet, vegetal, herbaceous, mineral, animal, fruity, dairy, maritime; grass, spinach, courgette, cucumber, parsley, sage, beef stock, honeydew melon, butter, shell food, seaweed, L-XL	<b>Cortese</b> , Piedmont, N-Italy; smooth and dry, bright, fruity, maritime, herbal, nutty, red apple, lemon, honeydew melon, shell food, grassy, almond, L

# CHAPTER 2

## The basics

Not everything we call “tea” is actually “tea”. Tea is made of the leaves or stems of the tea plant: the *Camellia sinensis*. If it is not made from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, then it is not a tea but an herbal infusion. The French have a separate name for this: tisane, making the distinction between tea and herbal infusion. In English, we call it herbal tea, but strictly speaking, this is not the correct term because there is no *Camellia sinensis* in it.

For example, rooibos does not come from *Camellia sinensis* and therefore is not tea, but an herbal infusion.

The same applies to rose hip, fennel, mint, nettle and verbena, among others. Furthermore, tea always contains caffeine (theine), while an infusion does not. Three exceptions to this rule are yerba maté, guayusa and Guaraná, as these three herbal infusions do contain caffeine and quite a lot of it at that.

### THE DIFFERENT FAMILY MEMBERS OF THE *CAMELLIA SINENSIS*

The tea plant has two main varieties:

- *Camellia sinensis sinensis*
- *Camellia sinensis assamica*

The genealogy of plants can be determined on a molecular and even genetic level.

Scientists have discovered several other varieties belonging to the *Camellia Theaceae* family, amongst them:

- *Camellia cambodia* (no western name as yet, contains caffeine)
- *Camellia taliensis* (“Purple Buds”; low in caffeine)
- *Camellia ptilophylla* (no caffeine)
- *Camellia crassicaule* (Hongyacha in Chinese; Yabao in the West; no caffeine)

The last three examples on the list contain practically no caffeine, a fact which puzzles scientists, as caffeine is the natural pesticide

of *Camellia Theaceae* plants and is important for its survival.

Since these three types are not as yet being commercially exploited and are still being intensively studied, this book focuses on the two types of tea that have been used for hundreds, if not thousands, of years.

### *CAMELLIA SINENSIS SINENSIS*

In the wild, the *Camellia sinensis sinensis* plant can grow up to four meters high, but on plantations it is kept small, about 1 meter high. This, of course, makes plucking the leaves much easier than from a ladder high up in a tree. Additionally, a plant needs a lot of energy for its trunk and branches to grow. If a tea plant’s height is kept low, more of its energy will be used for the leaves, which means more leaves and a higher yield.

Westerners call this family by its Latin name, *sinensis* (which means “Chinese”), while the Chinese call it *Cháhuá*, which means “tea flower.” This is confusing, because tea is always made from the leaves and stems of the plant, never from the flowers, but maybe the name tea flower is meant in a poetical sense.

The *sinensis* variety has small, soft leaves and a fine, complex aroma and it thrives most comfortably in a temperate climate, preferably high up in the mountains, between 600 and 2,500 meters altitude.

### *CAMELLIA SINENSIS ASSAMICA*

The *assamica* variety can grow up to 20 meters in the wild and thrives best in tropical climate. Its towering height makes plucking leaves even more difficult, so the *sinensis assamica* is usually kept short as well, up to one meter.

The Chinese call this variety *Da Ye*, which means “big leaf”. And the name says it all, as the *sinensis assamica* has much larger, coarser,



YABAO TEA

**COLD BREW HOT TEA**

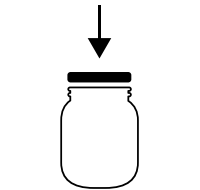
**Preparation cold brew  
STEP 1**



20 g (0.7 oz)

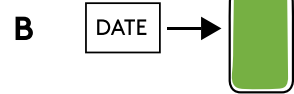


500 ml (17 fl. oz)



Min 6 h

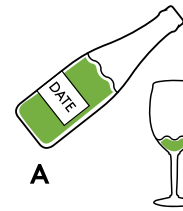
**STEP 2**



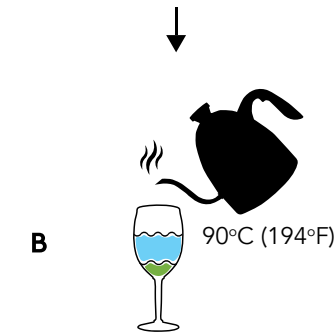
Keeps at least  
10 days unopened.  
After opening 3 days.

**When hot tea is required**

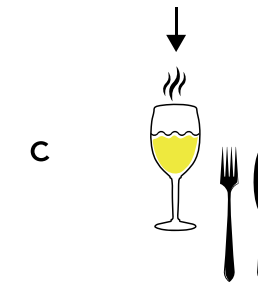
**STEP 3a**



40 ml (1.35 fl.oz)

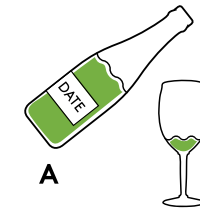


120 ml (4 fl.oz)

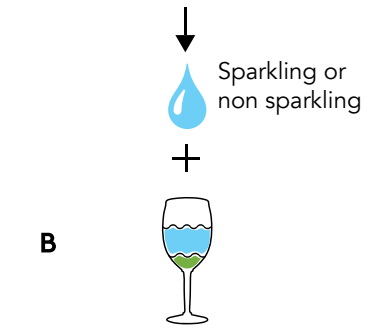


**When cold tea is required**

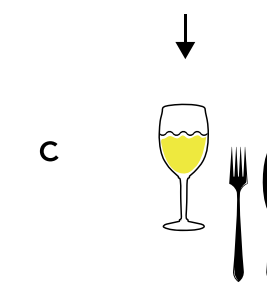
**STEP 3b**



40 ml (1.35 fl.oz)

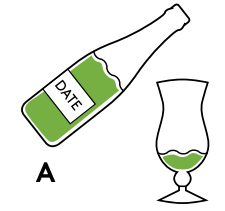


120 ml (4 fl.oz)

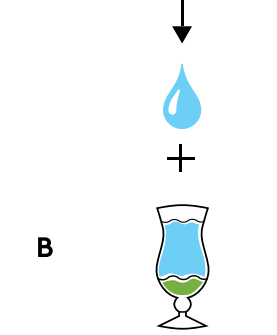


**When ice tea is required**

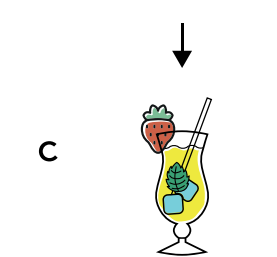
**STEP 3c**



40 ml (1.35 fl.oz)



120 ml (4 fl.oz)





## HOW TO STEEP TEA BEST?



- With the right water: fresh, soft, neutral pH

Calcium < 5  
Magnesium < 2  
HCO<sub>3</sub><sup>-</sup> < 17



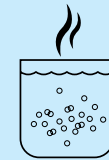
- and the right amount of dry tea



- at the right temperature



- with sufficient steeping time



### Tip

No need to bring soft water to a boil.

- preheat the pot with boiling water
- discard the water
- add the correct amount of tea leaf
- pour soft water of the right temperature into the pot
- set a timer for the desired steeping time
- pour the tea through a strainer into another pot







## CHAPTER 5

### RECIPES WITH THREE TEA SUGGESTIONS

For each recipe:  
use the cold brew hot tea method (see page 36 - 37),  
or steep the chosen tea 5 minutes before serving  
the food and serve the tea straight away.  
This way, the tea has time to cool down a bit.

You will find many more tea suggestions  
for food on pages 256 - 273.

- PB** Plant based
- VG** Vegetarian
- SF** Seafood-Fish
- MP** Meat-Poultry
- S** Sweets

PB

## Mashed potatoes with purslane, basil and almonds

### Serves 2

2 bunches purslane (or endive, if purslane is not available)  
500 g (17.6 oz) mashed potatoes  
4 tbsp roasted and salted almonds  
8 basil leaves  
extra virgin olive oil  
zest of 1 lemon  
½ tbsp lemon juice  
salt and pepper

This is a fast and simple summer dish, perfect for hot summer days.

Wash the purslane and pat dry, then roughly chop it.

Heat up the mashed potatoes or make it from scratch by bringing plenty of cold water to a boil with 500 g (17.5 oz) of peeled and chopped potatoes of equally sized chunks and a large pinch of salt. Cook for 15 minutes, drain, add some hot milk or hot vegetable stock, a tbsp of butter or olive oil and mashed potatoes until creamy.

Mix in the purslane, the lemon zest, the lemon juice, another splash of olive oil if necessary, salt and pepper.

Place the basil leaves on top of each other, roll them up tightly and cut thin slivers crosswise. Divide them over the mashed potatoes, together with the chopped almonds.

MP

### Optional

Replace the almonds with tiny cubes of fried bacon.



### \* Green tea with lemon

*Blend*  
The tea gets more depth and flavor. Both the purslane and the basil are enhanced, the mashed potatoes become creamier, with more umami.

### \*\* Yellow tea

*China*  
The almonds become more intense, the purslane becomes smooth and creamier, the basil becomes stronger and the mashed potatoes sweeter. The tea acquires more umami and becomes sweeter.

### \*\*\* Anji Bai Cha

*green tea, China*  
The purslane becomes smooth, sweeter. The food acquires more depth and umami, becomes stronger. The potatoes and nuts make the tea sweeter, the zest and basil make it brighter.



PB

## Roasted sweet potatoes with broccoli and tahini

### Serves 4

1 kg (35 oz) sweet potatoes or yams  
 1 red onion  
 8 small shallots  
 4 cloves garlic  
 500 g (17.5 oz) broccoli florets  
 1 liter (34 fl. oz) vegetable stock  
 50 ml (1.7 fl. oz) olive oil  
 1 tsp cumin seed (whole or powdered)  
 1 tsp coriander seed (whole or powdered)  
 2 cm (0.75 inch) ginger  
 handful of Italian parsley or coriander  
 optional: 4 tbsp of pomegranate seeds  
 salt and pepper

### Sauce

150 g (5.25 oz) tahini  
 1 tbsp sweet soy sauce (Ketjap Manis)  
 150 ml (5 fl. oz) cooking liquid from the broccoli  
 1 tbsp pomegranate molasses  
 1 tbsp wine vinegar

flatbread

### Marinade

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F) and move oven rack to middle position. Peel and grate the ginger. Roast the seeds in a hot, dry skillet until fragrant. Rub into a powder with the mortar and pestle. This means a little more work, but it has much more flavor. If you do not have a mortar and pestle, then use store-bought powdered spices.

### Vegetables

In a large bowl, mix the olive oil and the ginger, cumin, coriander, salt and pepper. Peel the sweet potatoes, cut them into 2½ cm (1-inch) chunks and add to the bowl. Peel the red onion and shallots, cut into wedges and add to the bowl, with the unpeeled cloves of garlic. Mix well until all the ingredients are covered with the mixture. Transfer to a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and place in the middle of the oven until the potatoes are cooked and the onions slightly blackened. This takes about 20 minutes. Bring the vegetable stock to a boil, add the broccoli florets, lower the heat and cook until al dente. Remove the vegetables and drain in a colander. Transfer to the big bowl with the oil-spice mixture. Add some more oil and spices if there is nothing left in the bowl.

### Sauce

Stir the tahini well until smooth, transfer to a blender. Add the other ingredients. Pulse and taste. Add more of the ingredients if necessary. Scoop the sauce into a sauce bowl.

### Finish

Chop the herbs. Mix the vegetables with the potatoes and onions and place in a shallow serving dish. Remove the skins from the roasted garlic and add to the serving dish. Garnish with the chopped herbs and pomegranate seeds. Serve the sauce on the side, together with flatbread.

MP

### Optional

Serve with roasted chicken thighs or roasted merguez sausages.



#### \* Jasmine

green or white tea, China  
 The tea acquires more depth, becomes less floral, acquires umami and adds floral notes to the food, which also becomes lighter and fresher, more intense.

#### \*\* Hōjicha

roasted green tea, Japan  
 The tea acquires notes of aniseed, with a fresh and clean texture, adds nutty notes to the sauce, enhances the food, makes it sweeter and deeper.

#### \*\*\* Wen Baozhong

light oolong tea, Taiwan  
 The tea makes the sauce and the potatoes lighter, enhances all flavors and brings them together. The umami is emphasized, floral notes are added.



PB

## Pulled jackfruit with BBQ sauce and coleslaw

Serves 6 - 8

1 kilo (35.27 oz) jackfruit  
6 - 8 buns

### Marinade for jackfruit

2 heaped tbsp brown sugar  
½ tbsp pimentón (powdered smoked paprika)  
½ tsp cayenne pepper or chili pepper  
200 ml (6.76 fl. oz) ketchup  
3 small shallots  
1 clove of garlic  
½ tbsp ground cumin  
2 tbsp white wine vinegar  
1 tbsp vegan umami sauce  
sea salt and pepper

### Coleslaw

½ cabbage, white or red  
2 small carrots  
1 stalk of celery  
1 small red onion  
1 green bell pepper  
200 ml (6.76 fl. oz) vegan mayonnaise  
zest of 1 lime  
juice of 2 limes  
1 tbsp caraway seeds  
sea salt and pepper

### 6 hours ahead or overnight

Start by making the pulled jackfruit. Taste the jackfruit. If too acidic for your taste, rinse well with cold water and drain. Remove all seeds and hard pieces. Pull the remaining pieces of jackfruit apart with a fork to make it look like shredded meat. Place all marinade ingredients in a blender or food processor and pulse. Transfer to a bowl, add the jackfruit, mix well. Cover and place in fridge for at least 6 hours or overnight.

### Coleslaw

Wash the cabbage, pat dry. Remove the core. Shave or cut the cabbage into very thin strips with a mandoline or food processor. Chop the onion very finely. Wash and dry the bell pepper, remove seeds, cut into very thin strips. Peel the carrots, cut into very thin julienne (match sticks) or grate them. Wash and dry the celery stalk, cut crosswise into thin slices. Mix all vegetables in a large bowl. Mix the vegan mayonnaise in a small bowl with the caraway seeds, the zest and juice of the lime, salt and pepper. Add the sauce to the vegetables. Stir well, cover. Place in fridge. May be made one day ahead.

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