

Massage your face with equal parts of coconut and mustard oil. Regular application reduces pimples and clears the skin



Make a homemade scrub using mushroom juice and brown sugar to get rid of dead cells



Pumpkin is rich in vitamin A. It promotes vision and maintains healthy skin, teeth and bones

ASK THE SEXPERT

DR MAHINDER WATSA



**1 I am a 43-year-old married man and generally keep good health. But, I have noticed that I have developed a condition with regards to my sperm volume. My problem is that my sperm volume has decreased a lot. I am not sure what has caused this. How can I treat it? I am concerned that this is likely to affect my enjoyment of sex and interfere with my sex life. Please advise.**

The volume may decrease but the number of sperms could remain the same. Visit a pathology laboratory, and be reassured - even if there is a decrease in the sperm count, it may not decrease your sexual pleasure.

**2 I am a 19-year-old man, and I have been having sex with a 38-year-old lady for three years now. She is a family friend. Some time ago, I decided to avoid her, but she is very persistent. She compels me to have sex with her. This is traumatising me deeply, and I am now trying to find a way to get her to leave me alone. Will this condition affect my future sexual life?**

You got yourself into the problem, and therefore have to find the solution as well. Get a job in another city.

**SEND YOUR QUERIES TO:** Ask the Sexpert, Bangalore Mirror, 9th Floor, Di Parc Trinity Building, #17, MG Road, Bengaluru-560 001 or e-mail us at drwatsa@timesgroup.com. You can contact Dr Watsa on mcwatsa@hotmail.com

Four dairy-free cheese and dip recipes that use easy-to-find vegan alternatives such as cashew, hazelnuts, almonds as well as tofu

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Whether you are a vegan, suffering from lactose intolerance or just someone who wants to try something new and healthy, vegan cheeses made from nuts, tofu and other plant-based sources are a "delectable way to put probiotics into your system", as Susmitha Subbaraju, owner of vegan restaurant Carrots, puts it. Subbaraju, who often conducts dairy alternative workshops at her Koramangala restaurant, has been experimenting with vegan cheese, milk and curds for years now. And apart from the four recipes she has shared with us, there are a host of helpful recipes and tutorials on her blog, *Veganosaurus*.

When she first tried her hand at making nut cheeses, Subbaraju was under the impression they would require "exotic ingredients such as miso or dulce". Although some of these recipes are time-consuming, over the years, Subbaraju has simplified the process considerably. Plus, the health benefits are many. "Since these cheeses are made of raw nuts and seeds which have been put through a fermentation process, they are rich in enzymes, nutrients and lactobacilli (the good kind of bacterial cultures."

# GOING NUTS WITH CHEESE



## FERMENTED CASHEW GARLIC CHEESE

PREP: 12 HOURS (FOR SOAKING) + 24 HOURS (FOR FERMENTATION); COOK: NO COOKING REQ; SERVES 2

**YOU NEED**  
 100gm cashew, 8 garlic cloves, pinch of salt, water

**METHOD**

1. Soak the cashew in a glass or plastic jar or container in plenty of water. Close the lid and leave it in the fridge for 10-12 hours.

2. Drain well and rinse. Transfer to a dry blender jar.  
 3. Add garlic and salt. Grind to a rough paste. Then add half a cup of filtered water. Grind again.

4. The mixture should look thick and creamy now. Scrape down the sides with a spatula and grind again till it's absolutely smooth and creamy.

5. Transfer to a glass jar and cover with lid loosely. Wrap the entire jar with a cloth and let this sit in a warm corner for 24 hours to ferment.

6. After fermentation, the cheese would have risen and have a lovely sour smell. This can be stored in a tightly-capped glass jar in the fridge for upto two weeks.

This cheese has a creamy, spreadable consistency



Rejuvelac is a vegan starter used to make curd or cheese

## RAW VEGAN HAZELNUT CHEESE

PREP: 24 HOURS + 6-8 HOURS (FERMENTATION); COOK: NO COOKING REQ; SERVES 3

**YOU NEED**

Rejuvelac, 3tbsp wheat berries (whole wheat grains), 1 cup whole or broken raw hazelnuts, salt, pepper and herbs to taste (For the rejuvelac) 1/2 cup wheat berries, 1 cup water

**METHOD TO MAKE THE REJUEVELAC**

1. Wash the wheat berries and soak them in a jar in 1 cup drinking water. Cover the jar with a cloth and keep it in a dark place for 24 hours. In cold weather, it could be left a little longer. Depending on the climate it should take between 1-5 days. You will know that it is ready by the colour and taste. The water will turn a little yellowish or serum coloured and will have a sweet fermented smell. Strain and pour this rejuvelac into a glass.  
 2. If desired, another cup of water may be added to the wheat berries to produce a second round of rejuvelac (don't ferment for more than 24 hours this time). This rich probiotic beverage can be drunk or used to

make cheese. After two such uses the wheat berries are usually thrown away.

**METHOD TO MAKE THE CHEESE**

1. Grind the hazelnut to form a powder (it doesn't need to be very fine) and then put this into a jar, which is at least twice the volume of the hazelnuts. Pour rejuvelac over to cover the nut powder. The whole mixture will now ferment and grow so if the jar is too small it can overflow. Cover the jar lightly so that it's not airtight.  
 2. After about 6-8 hours the cheese is ready to use. If you prefer a firm cheese, you can press out the water from the cheese by putting it into a cloth bag inside a colander and placing a weight over it overnight.  
 3. Remove cheese from the cloth and add salt, pepper and herbs or other seasoning. Mix well. Shape into round balls. Serve or store in the refrigerator. It'll keep for 10 days.  
 4. This cheese is great on a cheese platter; it also bakes well on pizzas and cheese toast.

## RAW MANGO VEGAN SOUR CREAM SALAD DRESSING

PREP: 25 MINS; COOK: NO COOKING REQ; SERVES 3



**YOU NEED**

1 sour raw mango, chopped, 1/4 cup cashew, 1/4 cup almonds, 1 tsp sesame seeds, 2 dried dates, chopped, 2 dried figs, chopped, 1/4 cup fresh mint leaves, 2 thin slices fresh ginger, 6 cloves of garlic, 3 spicy green chillies, roughly chopped, 1 tsp white wine vinegar (even regular white vinegar is fine), 1/4 tsp turmeric powder, 1 tsp nutritional yeast (optional), black salt (you could use common salt too)

**METHOD**

1. Grind together the nuts, seeds and dry fruits into a fine powder.  
 2. Add everything else, except vinegar, and grind well.  
 3. Add a little water at a time and blend into a smooth, creamy paste, with breaks in between to ensure that the grinder jar doesn't get heated up.  
 4. Chill for 10-15 minutes in the fridge.  
 5. Add the vinegar and whip until slightly fluffy and airy.  
 6. Transfer to an airtight glass jar and chill for half an hour.

You could use this as a dip or spread inside sandwiches and wraps

## FERMENTED HERBED TOFU DIP

PREP: 15 MINS + 12 HOURS (FOR FERMENTATION); COOK: NO COOKING REQ; SERVES 5



You can substitute cashew with almonds, hazelnuts or seeds

**YOU NEED**

400gm soft silken tofu, 100gm cashew, 5-6 garlic cloves, 1/4 cup lemon juice, 1/2 cup finely chopped fresh herbs (such as basil, parsley, coriander), salt and pepper to taste

**METHOD**

1. In a blender, grind the cashew to a fine powder.  
 2. Add tofu and grind to a smooth creamy consistency.  
 3. Add garlic, salt, pepper and lemon juice. Once the cheese ferments, it will get more sour, so don't use too much lemon juice. Blend for a few seconds. Add some water if the mixture is too thick.  
 4. Throw in the chopped herbs. Pulse a couple times (but don't blend completely).  
 5. Transfer the herbed dip to a glass or plastic bowl and cover. Let it ferment for 10-12 hours, or longer in cold weather. This can be stored in the fridge for about two weeks.  
 6. Serve with crudites and breadsticks or use in place of butter and mayo on sandwiches or on pizzas.

Two city entrepreneurs walk us through the process of creating exquisite tea blends

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As you catch a whiff of cinnamon, star anise and apples, it's easy to imagine that you have just been handed a plate of hot apple pie. Instead, we are looking down at a hot cup of tea called, rather poetically, Winter in a Mug. As more and more tearooms and artisan tea boutiques make their way into the city, there's a bewildering array of flavoured teas and tisanes at one's disposal. Joining the tea party are two freshly-brewed city-based entrepreneurs, Medha and Mayura Rao, who recently launched AsumTea, a line of organic, finely-crafted tea blends and tisanes (or fruit teas). United by their love for tea, the cousins gave up corporate jobs to spend the last one year brewing potions and testing them on friends and family. Neither has any formal raining in tea blending - their learning has been through trial and error, kitchen experiments, research and consultations with experts. They have launched nine blends (three flavoured green teas, two flavoured white teas and four tisanes). They share what goes into the making of flavoured teas.

OFFBITE

After all, many of us complain about the vegetal, bitter aftertaste of green tea. Step one is using good quality loose leaf tea as much as possible. "Remember, fresh green tea brewed right is never bitter," says Medha. To that end, the duo is sourcing green, white and first flush black tea from an estate in Darjeeling after having tried samples from 16-17 tea growers across Kerala, Assam and West Bengal. Lighter green and white teas naturally lend themselves to flavour pairings. Harnessing India's natural bounty

# Flavoured teas find favour

## TEA FROM DARJEELING, FLOWERS FROM UTTARAKHAND

Despite India being a tea-drinking nation (pardon us, Bengaluru's coffee lovers), flavoured teas, at least the ones on most supermarket shelves, taste terribly synthetic or overpowering. Mayura, who has spent the last 10 years in the UK, found herself hauling tea blends back to Bengaluru when she returned to the city a year ago. "Though the alternate tea category has exploded, we felt that a lot of what's readily available is very singular in terms of flavour. And India is home to a lot of fruits, flowers and botanicals that can actually complement tea so beautifully," Medha says. She notes that more people are sipping on green tea for health reasons, but taste has been altogether neglected.



was the next step - one that required time and patience. It meant finding a supplier for botanicals (leaves/herbs such as nettle, echinacea and seabuckthorn used in tisanes), dried lavender and liquorice root in Uttarakhand; sourcing marigold and jasmine from a farmer in Coimbatore and fruits from local wholesale markets.

**TASTING & TESTING**

One of their key principles while blending their teas has been to create a lay-

ered experience. "While mapping our flavour profiles, we realised that layering was important. We want people to get at least two different tastes from one blend - whether it's sweet and sour or tangy and spicy. So, there's a lead profile (what you taste right at the outset), a middle and a finish (what forms the aftertaste)," Medha adds. Using the example of their After 8 tisane, which makes for a good after-meal drink, she explains how the lead profile or start would be the slight tartness of apples

and oranges, while the spearmint would surface later followed by an after-taste of fennel (what is traditionally eaten after a meal). "Taste is a personal thing. Close to 700 people have tried our teas and everyone has a different input about what tastes and flavours they experience from the same tea." Of course, training their palates took time. The fact that neither of them smoke helps. Eating clean, non-spicy food to keep their taste buds open while making tea blends has become a way of life.

**THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE ART**

The other important process they had to master was dehydrating the fruits for their blends. The first time they tried drying slices of apple at home in the oven, the sisters ended up with charred fruit. Mayura says, "It's important for the fruit to retain a certain amount of moisture so that it has flavour but doesn't spoil easily." A process that typically takes about 24 hours in an industrial style oven, called a dehydrator. The fact that Mayura is helping her father run a business that develops analytical instrumentation for pharma firms helped them with the technical know-how required. From measuring the optimal moisture in dehydrated fruits to figuring out shelf life, the scientific approach has helped set up a protocol at their Jayanagar manufacturing unit.

In the process of developing a few more flavours that they plan to introduce this year, including a Rooibos Chocolate blend, inspiration comes in many forms. Banana Nut Bread and Winter in a Mug, for instance, are dessert teas that aim to capture the essence of banana bread and apple pie. Hot Mango Mess, a white tea blend, plays on nostalgia invoking memories of a favourite summer treat - raw mango and chilli. Eastern Zing elevates the classic green tea and lime combination with flavours such as sweet lime, lemongrass and ginger.

And, the tea enthusiasts have a word of advice: the right brewing techniques make all the difference. Green tea and white teas are never meant to be boiled like good old *masala chai*. So, it's important to let the boiled water sit for a couple of minutes before you pour it over the tea. Also, flavoured teas make for great ice teas but you will need to brew them hot, then chill and serve.

## VINOGRAPHY

by HEEMANSHU ASHAR



Last column, I wrote about Art and Wine and how they converge in a beautiful symphony of liquid and label. They also live with the same peril - Counterfeiting.

Some say counterfeiting is a form of flattery. But Bill Koch, a billionaire and an avid wine and art collector does not agree. He sued the con artists who palmed off counterfeit wines to him, spending almost \$25 million in lawsuits and legal fees. The most coveted wines from France and Italy are scarce. For example a famous small vineyard in Burgundy, France with a 4-acre plot that in any of its best years produces only 8,000 bottles is not much to go around considering the world wine population will attract con artists to replicate the lot of the consignment with the same label and reasonable quality that can be sold at present market rates. The present market rates at over US\$10,000 for a 750ml bottle of Domaine de la Romanée-Conti also known as just, DRC. Even in new wine world of USA, Opus One from California is one wine that attracts a lot of attention by the con artists for counterfeiting their vintages.

Today modern wineries, which have suffered counterfeit versions, have taken measures to be one step ahead in the game. They have created special foil capsules for the bottles that change to specific colours when seen over special filters. Labels are embedded with RFID chips, which on scanning send signals to the servers of the wine companies who in turn authenticate the originality of the bottle to the consumer. These wines are of course expensive and iconic. These wineries also request consumers to destroy the bottle when it's empty, or best return them to the winery so that they can be accounted for, and destroyed for recycling to avoid counterfeiting. Fame as they same is a double-edged sword!



Heemanshu Ashar, a student of wine for life, believes demystifying wine is his road to responsible enjoyment. Write to him on heemanshu.ashar@gmail.com



Medha and Mayura Rao, founders of AsumTea

### DIY TEA BLENDS SPICED GREEN TEA

**Leading notes:** Sweetness of cardamom and spice from clove  
**Ratio of loose tea, cardamom and clove:** 4:2:1  
 Pound the cardamom and clove coarsely - best done the old fashioned way, by hand! In a container, mix tea leaves with spices in the proportion mentioned. Store in an airtight jar. The blend is ready to use immediately and can be stored for six months in hygienic, dry conditions.

### ORANGE GINGER WHITE TEA

**Leading notes:** Citrusy orange and sharp ginger  
**Ratio of loose tea, orange, and ginger:** 1:3:1  
 Sun dry sliced oranges and grated ginger, removing the fruit's seeds but keeping the peel intact. In a container, mix tea leaves with other ingredients in the proportion mentioned. Store in an airtight jar. The blend is ready to use immediately and can be stored for six months in hygienic, dry conditions.

### ROSE MINT GREEN TEA

**Leading notes:** Citrusy-sweet lemongrass and cooling mint  
**Ratio of loose tea, lemongrass, and mint:** 3:1:2  
 Dried rose petals and mint are easily available at leading stores. In a container, mix tea leaves with other ingredients in the proportion mentioned. Store in an airtight jar. The blend is ready to use immediately and can be stored for six months in hygienic, dry conditions.