

RIGHT: Cynthia Gold '93, with a "tea plucker" at the Kirkoswald Estate, in Sri Lanka's Dimbula region that produces award-winning black teas; lower right: A diversity of teas.



### Steeped in Tea Recipes

The Charlotte Campus was host to S&D Coffee's Tea Recipe Contest in November 2010 that drew more than 60 entries. First place went to **Blair Cannon '11**, who won \$500 for his Grilled Green Tea Duck. **Charlie Ward '11** took the first-runner up prize in the beverage category for his Fire & Ice Tea, winning \$300, and first runner-up in the food category went to **Michael Daniel '13** for his Orange Ginger Cupcakes, for a \$100 prize. **Paul DeVries**, Charlotte assistant professor of culinary arts and **Jenna Thompson '09**, account specialist at S&D, organized the contest, and S&D Coffee donated all of the tea used by the contestants.



## The Growing World of Tea

Tea sommeliers, tea tastings, tea cafés — all are part of the burgeoning tea phenomenon. Flavors and styles are endless, as are the uses for tea. The ancient beverage has gone beyond the teacup into tea cocktails, smoothies and flavor agents for dishes and desserts.

**Cynthia Gold '93**, tea sommelier at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel & Towers, has made it her livelihood. Previously the owner of three tea restaurant-cafés in Boston, Mass., Gold has traveled to Asia to study infusion, and teaches internationally about cooking with tea and pairing tea with food.

Gold's wealth of knowledge begins with the source of tea — the leaves. All tea comes from one plant species, *Camellia sinensis*. Different types — black, green, white, yellow, Oolong and Pu-erh (dried tea) — are varieties of the plant that have adapted to thrive in diverse regions and under distinct styles of processing, explains Gold. Black tea is the most widely produced and includes the popular Darjeeling, Earl Grey and Ceylon teas.

Main factors affecting tea during processing include when and how leaves are harvested, the heat source used to fire or dry the leaves, and oxidation, a chemical change in tea leaves when their cell walls rupture, exposing them to air. Like brewing coffee, how tea is steeped can enhance its flavor. Each tea has its own needs. Lower oxidation tea like green tea calls for a shorter steep time and lower

temperature than higher oxidation tea like black tea. The water quality and temperature, infusion time and taking care not to crowd the tea (whether in a tea ball, tea sack or mesh cup) are also key.

As to the health benefits of tea, "the research is very promising, but more is needed," says Gold. "What's earned green and white tea the lion's share of press is that they are so high in antioxidants." As for caffeine levels in tea versus coffee, Gold says, "There is some variation between teas, but all tea still has a fraction of the caffeine in coffee." And herbal tea isn't tea at all without *Camellia sinensis*. "Herbal ingredients may be blended into the tea, but if no tea is present, it simply isn't tea," assures Gold.

To learn about tea, Gold suggests the Specialty Tea Institute ([www.teausa.com](http://www.teausa.com)), part of the Tea Association of the USA that holds certification level classes.

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TEA PHOTOS BY JULIAN LANDAY; ISABEL: PHOTO BY EDWIN DAVID

### > quick take

Chef Rick Hirsch '88 was named 2010 Chef of the Year by the Maine Restaurant Association. Hirsch owns Damariscotta River Grill in Damariscotta.

## Sustainability Fills Chef's Plate

"When you run your own company you have two mindsets ... one is what you do for your craft and expertise ... that pays your bills. The flipside is you use your craft and expertise to really push and choose what's important to you; what you donate your time to," says **Rob Corliss '88**.

What's important to Corliss is practicing, teaching and promoting sustainability, food sourced locally, healthy cooking and eating and overall health and wellness.

In 2009 Corliss founded All Things Epicurean (ATE), "a culinary company focused on sustainable innovation" that he runs himself in Nixa, Mo., bringing in help as needed. His work includes consulting on local farm sources, developing recipes and menus, matching farmers to vendors, helping market businesses built around food and speaking about sustainability at such events as the American Culinary Federation Southeast Regional Conference in 2008 and the National Restaurant Association show in Chicago, Ill., this May.

Corliss also spends time volunteering in local schools in Springfield. At Pleasant View Elementary, Corliss and local farmer **Curtis Milsap** use a greenhouse and outdoor garden to teach close to 120 students how to compost, plant and harvest their own crops, and then prepare, cook, eat and enjoy their bounty. He is also a member of the School Health Advisory Council for the Nixa School District, where his five-year-old daughter, Grayson, is a student at Century Elementary.

Corliss was guest chef at James Beard House in 1996 and 1999 and featured chef at the James Beard Olympic Event at the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Olympics. He was a chef at the Williamsburg Inn, Williamsburg, Va., executive chef for the Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club in Vero Beach, Fla., and at Spring Creek Ranch in Jackson Hole, Wyo.

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Rob Corliss '88 and his daughter, Grayson, at Century Elementary School in Nixa, Mo.

### Culinary Sustainability Trends à la Rob Corliss

- Chef and farmer collaborative partnerships
- Restaurants sourcing directly from local farms
- Classic butchering and charcuterie resurgence; whole animal, nose to snout
- Biodegradable packaging
- Rooftop and on-site gardens for restaurants and other food service businesses
- Tying food to wellness
- Chefs involved with their communities and schools
- Consumers demanding sustainable products

## Bringing It All Back Home

"I love going bold, making an unexpected combination that ideally will take your palate to an unexpected place where it has never been before," says **Maira Isabel '95**, talking excitedly about her own style of cooking.

Isabel, who lives in Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, shared her passion for food through daily appearances on "Levántate," aired in Spanish on Telemundo for the past two years. Beginning in spring, she will be featured on the Argentina-based Utilisima ([utilisima.com](http://utilisima.com)) network seen throughout Latin America and the U.S. Isabel's first cookbook, "Gourmet Para Todos Los Dias" (Gourmet for Every Day) was the number one seller in Puerto Rico for 10 weeks when released in May 2008.

In her homeland the food is "spicy, but not hot," using ingredients like sofrito, a base condiment for many dishes, made from cilantro (a less pungent cilantro), recaó, a Vietnamese coriander, and *aji dulce*, sweet red and green peppers. Puerto Rican dishes have a diverse history built on ingredients and techniques from native Taino Indians, Spaniards who colonized the island and African slaves.

In Puerto Rico, as in many places, there's a return to basics, according to Isabel. "We are now using more fresh ingredients as we did 15 to 20 years ago ... People are going back to cooking at home ... There is also a new passion for anything artisan, from cheeses, to beer and breads."

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