



THOUGHT CRAFT
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Pure joy

I love tea. Any time is perfect time for a cup, preferably with nan khatai, or chocolate fudge cake, ginger biscuits, carrot halwa, or simply on its own — first thing in the morning, in the afternoon, or whenever I feel like it.

Although almost every day is sunny in Dhaka, I feel awakened after I have the first steaming mug of tea in the morning. Looking at the sunlight peeking in through the windows, I think to myself, "What a lovely day. I must do something special!"

I look forward to surprises with my tea, be it decadent toast fingers slathered in butter, or toast with butter and guava jelly, or sometimes 'bakarkhani' with slivers of Dhaka cheese on top of the jelly.

Tea has a bracing effect on almost everyone. A friend of my mother, who is a psychic astrologer and who dropped by at our house often, would welcome the arrival of the tea trolley with a broad smile. As soon as he took his first sip from the cup, he would sigh with pleasure and say "Aah, chomotkar!"

He was amazingly accurate in his predictions, and I always feel a large part of his inspiration/second sight came from my mother's tea.

Tea is a definite antidepressant. An old relative used to say to me when I appeared stressed, "I'm bringing you a cup of tea, and everything will be alright."

Invitations to tea are much more enticing than invitations to lunch or dinner. For one thing, I always feel peckish at teatime, and for another, I know that whoever the hostess, the table will be graced with the finest Dhaka porcelain, sprigged, striped or gold-bordered, that the silver will be fine, and the spread will be dazzling.

There will be several types of cake, tiny sandwiches of egg, salmon or cucumber in beautiful three-tiered trays, lemon tarts, and of course, chaat — fruit chaat, chaat with chick peas garnished with cilantro and green chillies, and accompanied by tamarind sauce, various types of halwa, egg, carrot and semolina, samosas, and even perhaps delicious "muri" dressed with mustard oil, onions and chillies! And if they serve sponge rosogollas, I throw discretion and weight watching to the winds, and say to myself, like Lillian Roth, "I'll cry tomorrow!"

I cannot end my tribute to tea without plagiarising from Lilly Bollinger —

"I drink it when I'm happy and when I'm sad.

Sometimes I drink it when I'm alone.

When I have company I consider it obligatory.

I trifle with it if I'm not hungry and drink it when I am.

Otherwise, I never touch it — unless I'm thirsty."



MUSINGS

Work or study stash

As we master the art of 'adulting', there comes a point in our lives when we have to commit ourselves in a long term relationship with a desk. As depressing as it sounds, LS brings you a quick fix to bring you out of boredom while still keeping your productivity level high. The secret is snacking.

Any kind of work where you have to sit at a desk or you have to study for hours on end, you require food to keep your brain from frying up.

To prepare your snack starter-pack, you should choose items that are easily available, because snacking is now a necessity. Nuts and seeds are the perfect go-to options and it is an excellent source of vitamin E, which helps prevent inevitable cognitive decline such as Alzheimer's and dementia that are caused if the body and

mind are not properly looked after. Eating these foods will make you super productive, and the nourishments in the foods will keep your mind and body rejuvenated.

Granola and muesli bars are also convenient choices for a work stash. Although they are on the expensive side in Dhaka, the benefits exceed the cost. Whole grains are essential to keeping your blood flowing smoothly and overall wellbeing, which will help you retain more information and tire less easily.

Another food that complements the desk life is pomegranate juice; both freshly squeezed and packaged are easily available here. Pomegranate is an antioxidant, the regular and moderate consumption of which prevents free-radicals colliding in your brain.

Other beverage options include freshly brewed caffeine, either in the form of tea or coffee. Refined caffeine items have proved to not provide the same benefits as fresh brews, so refrain from packaged tea or coffee.

For chocolate lovers, dark chocolate should be your partner in crime as it contains several stimulant components, including caffeine. The components in dark chocolate help with focus and concentration. It stimulates the production our brain and body loves, that is endorphins.

Endorphins keeps your mood stable, so half to one ounce of dark chocolate a day will always keep you smiling.

By Sanumkia Siddiqui
Photo: Collected

