

A DRINK TO YOUR HEALTH

If you find whiskey boring, a new book of cocktails tells you how to use everything from tomatoes and mangoes to bananas and jamun to mix yourself the perfect evening drink. Sunday MiDDAY gets up, close and personal with the mixers and movers behind the book



Rayna Jhaveri, editor of The Tulleeho Book of Cocktails enjoys a gin-based Mint Devil at her Babulnath residence. PIC/PRATHIK PANCHAMIA



Vikram Achanta raises a toast with chief mixologist of Tulleeho, Rohan Jelkie in their New Delhi office bar. PIC/ SUBHASH BAROLIA (Below) Vodka-based Tamartartini cocktail

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The Tulleeho! Book of Cocktails could have easily not happened. Vikram Achanta, a management consultant in New Delhi, could have lost touch with his quizzing buddy from school and Economics honours batch mate from college, P Venkatesh, and their school junior, Krishna Nagaraj.

Or Rayna Jhaveri, a travel writer and blogger could have decided she was too tired to attend a party in New Delhi one night, six years ago, soon after she had returned from the United States, where she had spent a decade studying and simultaneously specialising in wine appreciation.

But Achanta did keep in touch with his buddies and Jhaveri did attend the party.

And so, Tulleeho! the website was created in 1999, when Achanta, Nagaraj and Venkatesh decided to create a source pool for tipplers who wanted to experiment with cocktails and figure out the right use for their coupettes and brandy snifters.

Jhaveri — who was introduced to beer by her great grandfather at the age of three while on a road trip in the US — returned to India after tasting all the wine she possibly could during the course of her studies in Ithaca, close to the wine country in upstate New York, and began working with Sula. And at a party one night in 2005, she met Achanta and discovered a shared passion for wine, oddball cocktails and good food.

Two years ago, Achanta approached Jhaveri to edit a book on cocktails that catered to the Indian palate. When she agreed, the Tulleeho team of mixologists (the company had grown from being an information portal to a bartending 'institute' since its inception) got to work. The team collated the recipes posted by readers on the website, and tweaked them to get the right mix. They also began making new mixes — born, in some cases, out of what sights may come.

The Jamuntini, for instance, made its appearance after Achanta noticed a cart heaped with jamun, a ubiquitous summer berry, whose leaves often adorn marriage pandals in Maharashtra, while driving down to office.

From a collection of about 400 recipes, they whittled it down to 131 that made it to the book.

"Vikram asked me, how many cocktails could I taste without keeling over, and I told him 15," said Jhaveri, who conducted the second round of tasting in Mumbai.

She spent afternoons spread over two "glorious months" in 2009 travelling from her

Babulnath residence to the Tulleeho office in Andheri, where she would make her way through a selection of meticulously prepared cocktails with three other mixologists.

"Often, someone from the office would run down to the sabzi mandi to pick up some fresh fruits or herbs — we were constantly inventing new infusions," adds Jhaveri. These included everything from tamatar to meetha paan.

"The Indian palate," says Jhaveri, likes it "sweet, fruity and fresh". The ingredients, agrees Achanta, make all the difference, since several recipes in the book incorporate seasonal fruits that we've grown up eating. Hence, something like the Sabai — made with bananas, chocolate (even a Kit Kat will do) and white rum — works, because the dessert drink is made with ingredients that are not only readily available, but also satisfy the Indian sweet tooth.

The book also classifies its drinks according to festivals — there are Holi, Diwali and Christmas specials — but, as Jhaveri adds, the idea is hardly to labour the point. At the end of the day, the book has tried to offer a drink for every occasion. There are the classics made of rum and whiskey, such as the Whiskey Sour, which as the book informs us, was popularised in the 1870s by a certain Eliot Stubb who reached Iquique, a Peruvian city, headed straight to the nearest bar and found upon his arrival that he didn't quite like what was on offer. Stubb set up his own bar and created a drink with whiskey, adding a dash of the local lime and generous amounts of sugar.

"Whiskey Sour took the world by storm," the recipe concludes.

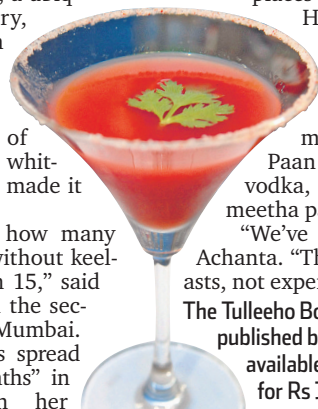
Handy tips also make their way into the book ("Serve fine cognacs in a brandy balloon, also known as a brandy snifter. Cup the glass with your hands, give it a gentle swirl, stick your nose in and breathe deeply to start enjoying your cognac even before it hits your tongue") as do random facts ("In the 1600s, thermometers used brandy instead of mercury").

Drinks, points out Jhaveri, are a window into a place's culture, as much as food and clothes and history are. "It's how I've always learnt about places and people," she says.

Hence if the Whiskey Sour points to the Peruvian predilection for sourness, nothing could be more 'Indian' than the Paan Surprise, made with vodka, condensed milk and meetha paan.

"We've kept it simple," adds Achanta. "This book is by enthusiasts, not experts."

The Tulleeho Book of Cocktails published by Westand Ltd is available at leading bookstores for Rs 395



TRY THESE AT HOME



JAMUNTINI

This one is truly a Tulleeho special that has crossed international borders. The idea for this drink came as a brainwave to a hardcore 'tullean' who saw this drink as a perfect Indian contribution to the revival of gin, the world over. The fresh sweet and tannic flavour of jamuns combines brilliantly with the junipery flavour of gin and creates an unputdownable summertime drink. Jamun is a summertime berry available throughout the monsoons. It has a rich dark purple colour. Also known as jambul, black plum, damson plum, java plum.

INGREDIENTS
▶ 60 ml London dry gin

- ▶ 5-6 Jamun
- ▶ 10ml Lime juice
- ▶ 5ml Sugar syrup
- ▶ Salt to rim
- ▶ Ice to fill shaker

Muddle the jamuns in a cocktail shaker. Fill with ice, add the gin, lime juice and sugar syrup. Shake and double-strain into a chilled salt-rimmed cocktail glass. Serve immediately.

TULLEEHO TIP: Add red chilly powder to the salt and use it to rim the glass thereby lending the drink a unique spicy zing!
TYPE — Tulle Tipple
GLASS — Cocktail
TAG — Market Fresh
LEVEL — Moderate

BLACK KNIGHT

A real pick-me-up drink. If caffeine, cola and alcohol don't get you going, you better check your pulse.

- INGREDIENTS**
▶ 60 ml Dark Rum
▶ 1 tsp Coffee powder
▶ Cola to top
▶ Ice to fill glass

Build the drink over ice in the glass and serve
TYPE — Tulle Tipple
GLASS — Collins
TAG — Old Boy's Club
LEVEL — Easy

CARIBBEAN HARVEST

Bananas. Chocolate. Coconut. Rum. Need we say more?

- INGREDIENTS**
▶ 30 ml White rum
▶ 10 ml Malibu
▶ 10 ml Crème de banana
▶ 10 ml Crème de cacao
▶ Ice to fill shaker and glass
▶ Banana slice & Maraschino cherries to garnish

Shake all the ingredients with ice and double strain into a

chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with spear of banana and cherries. Alternatively, serve the drink on the rocks in an old fashioned glass. If you don't have Crème de cacao, use chocolate syrup.

TYPE — Tulle Tipple
GLASS — Cocktail or Old Fashioned
TAG — Dessert
LEVEL — Easy

MINT JULEP

The Mint Julep originated in the southern United States, probably during the eighteenth century. It first appeared in print in a book by John Davis, published in London in 1803, where it was described as "a dram of spirituous liquor that has mint steeped in it, taken by Virginians of a morning." This classic cocktail is most famously associated with the Kentucky Derby.

- INGREDIENTS**
▶ Bourbon whiskey 60 ml
▶ Mint leaves 10-12
▶ Brown Sugar 2 tsp
▶ Water/soda a splash, to top
▶ Crushed ice to fill ¾ glass

Muddle the mint and sugar together, reserving a mint sprig for garnish. Add the crushed ice and whiskey, stir and top with more crushed ice.

Now add the splash of water or soda. Garnish with mint sprig and serve.

Bourbon is an American whiskey, a type of distilled spirit made primarily from corn and named for Bourbon County, Kentucky.

TULLEE TRIVIA: The Mint Julep has been the cause of much depravity in popular culture, including in Hunter A Thompson's Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas, the James Bond thriller Goldfinger and F Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby.

TYPE — Classic
GLASS — Collins (or if you are in a lavish mood, a classic silver Mint Julep cup)
TAG — Herbs & Spice
LEVEL — Easy



The leaves of Red Tea are sourced from the Cederberg mountains of South Africa. The tea, available in the store for Rs 800 for 50g, is reputed to improve concentration and cure diarrhoea

MOVE ON FROM CUTTING CHAI

A new online store promises you a glimpse into the exotic world of tea, one sip at a time

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COFFEE, tea or me? The month-old online store, Tea Culture of the World, intends to make that choice an easy one. After all, how can you not be tempted by a Blooming Tea that promises to unfurl in your glass, or the Colyx that tastes like coffee?

Tea Culture of the World was started by 33-year-old Mumbai-based physiotherapist Dr Rupali Ambegaonkar, to cater to tea-drinking aficionados. The online store delivers 12 varieties of exotic and rare teas from all over the world to your doorstep.

Ambegaonkar's love affair with tea began when her friend brought her back some Tie Gua Yin Tea from an overseas trip.

"The first sip, and I was hooked. The healthy tea did me a world of good," says Ambegaonkar. Once her stock got over, she found it difficult to replenish and that was when the idea of an online store was born.

Ambegaonkar researched, travelled abroad for tea-tasting sessions and started the Iron Buddha Co., a beverage company, out of which Tea Culture of the World was born.

The focus is on health and the website lists the type of tea required to cure specific ailments. For example: white tea from Sri Lanka helps increase bone density and has anti-cancer properties. The Pu-erh Tea from China reduces cholesterol, aids in digestion and increases metabolic activity.

"Every country has particular types of tea with medicinal properties and we offer a selection of them here," says Ambegaonkar.

Although limited, the selection comes with a short write-up about the tea and how to

prepare it. For instance, Blooming tea, informs the website, gets its name from the brewing process since it's like watching a flower bloom, albeit, within minutes. Blooming tea consists of hand-picked flower buds such as chrysanthemum, jasmine, lily, or hibiscus that are then wrapped in tea leaves and tied with a cotton thread. The buds are released and brewed when added to boiling water. Typically, this tea is served in a tall glass, brandy snifter or any other wide-based glass cup so you can watch the bud bloom.

Red tea, we're told, is made of the leaves of the rooibos plant found in the Cederberg mountains of South Africa, and contains a small amount of caffeine that helps stimulate the brain cells and improve concentration. It is also good for curing diarrhoea.

What's more, many of these varieties are consumed without adding milk, making them easier to prepare than normal tea.

"You just need to pour hot water using a strainer," says Ambegaonkar, whose personal favourite remains the Tie Gua Yin Tea, "as it helps reduce cholesterol and lose weight". Rose Tea comes a close second, because of its soothing floral fragrance.

With prices ranging between Rs 800 to Rs 1,200 for a 50g package, the cuppa does not come cheap. However, says Ambegaonkar, "One package lasts for a month. Since the tea is not processed (it is made of tea buds and flowers), it can be re-used at least thrice."

www.teacultureoftheworld.com
You can purchase the product online, using credit or debit card. Cash on delivery for Mumbaiers