

# steeped in tradition

TEAHOUSES SERVE UP  
SERENITY AND RITUAL

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In the chaos of modern life, Asian-style teahouses provide a refuge from the press of traffic, the cacophony of cell phones and the stress of multitasking. Unlike their British tearoom counterparts where taking afternoon tea becomes a ceremony of eating scones, an Asian teahouse offers an interlude of tranquil tea-sipping and small Asian-style snacks in a serene atmosphere. This is good news for the stressed-out people who seek calming influences in life.

Tearooms and teahouses have become so popular that many have sprouted branches, such as Teatism in

in the Washington, DC, area or the Japanese-style Urasenke Chanoyu in New York, San Francisco, Seattle and Honolulu. And all-Asian teahouses, relative newcomers to the American market, are blazing a popular path. "The birthplace of tea is China," explains Devan Shah, co-owner of the Tea Society in San Francisco. "So people consider that the Chinese and Japanese have the best teas, and they have run teahouses for centuries."

The Asian-style places are catching on big, he says, with perhaps

▼ nearly 100 teahouses now pouring this amber brew in the United States.

While some Americans have switched from coffee to tea, others are simply attracted to the quiet, lingering pleasures of the teahouse itself, which contrast sharply with the over-caffeinated hustle of jolt-and-bolt coffeehouse chains. "Atmosphere is everything," Ching Ching, a Hong Kong native who now lives in Washington, DC, says. She is the owner of Ching Ching Cha—"chá" means "tea" in Cantonese and Mandarin—in the Georgetown section of Washington. With its soaring skylight and soothing music, the teahouse is perfect for quiet conversation, reading poetry or just staring into space over a cup of tea and a plateful of pan-Asian food.

Ching Ching Cha's lunchbox—inspired by the decorative and utilitarian Japanese bento boxes—is a colorful array of vegetables and teriyaki tofu. The menu avoids strong flavors, Ching Ching tells me, because nothing should interfere with the tea. Her favorite beverage on the menu is dragonwell tea, a green variety she reports took her 3 days to learn how to brew. Ching

Ching travels back to Asia three or four times a year to buy these special teas as well as the graceful teapots and accessories on sale at her teahouse.

At Great Tea International, near Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia, owner Charlotte Lin and her husband, Benjamin Olshin, have recreated a piece of Taiwan, with an array of healthful teas and food and a selection of crafts on sale from the region. Several steps down from the street, their teahouse becomes a cozy hideaway.

Then consider Franchia, the new Korean vegetarian teahouse on Park Avenue in the middle of Manhattan. The very structure of its space immediately transports customers to another world and to tranquility. Franchia's ceiling, with its pattern of vivid green and red flowers, resembles a traditional Korean temple, and the teahouse is, indeed, a world apart from the noise and bustle of Park Avenue.

Staring out the window at the Park Avenue traffic in Manhattan and sipping a soothing ginger tea, I can readily agree with one of the sayings on Franchia's menu: "My mind is as clear as water."

## Bubble, Bubble!

Tea is not all Zen quiet and nuanced flavors. The hottest trend in tea drinking today is bubble tea. Although it originated in Taiwan, bubble tea has attracted a pan-Asian following and is now making inroads in non-Asian communities. Colorful and with wild, loopy flavors, bubble tea is well-suited for the young, the urban and the trend-seekers.

Combine sugar, black or green tea, milk and the flavor of your choice,

and shake. The liquid bubbles from the shaking, which gives the drink its name. But the key ingredient is the large tapioca pearls, the same stuff that your grandmother may remember so fondly. The tapioca pearls, like gummy ball bearings, settle at the bottom of the glass. A wide-mouthed straw helps you slurp up everything.

Great Tea International offers a version of bubble tea on its menu. "If we're going to do a bubble tea, which is a corruption, at least let's do it properly," Charlotte Lin says. Their bubble tea is made with real green or black tea instead of a packaged bubble-tea mix, and is sweetened with coconut milk.

Bubble tea is easy to make at home. Invite your friends over, and turn your home into a hip, modern teahouse.

### Coconut Bubble Tea

SERVES 2

Asian tapioca pearls come in two sizes, so be sure to select the larger ones. These require precooking before they are soft enough to use. If you want to boil extra

pearls for future cups of bubble tea, cover unused softened pearls with water, and refrigerate for about 1 day. Drain before using. Look for them in Asian markets.

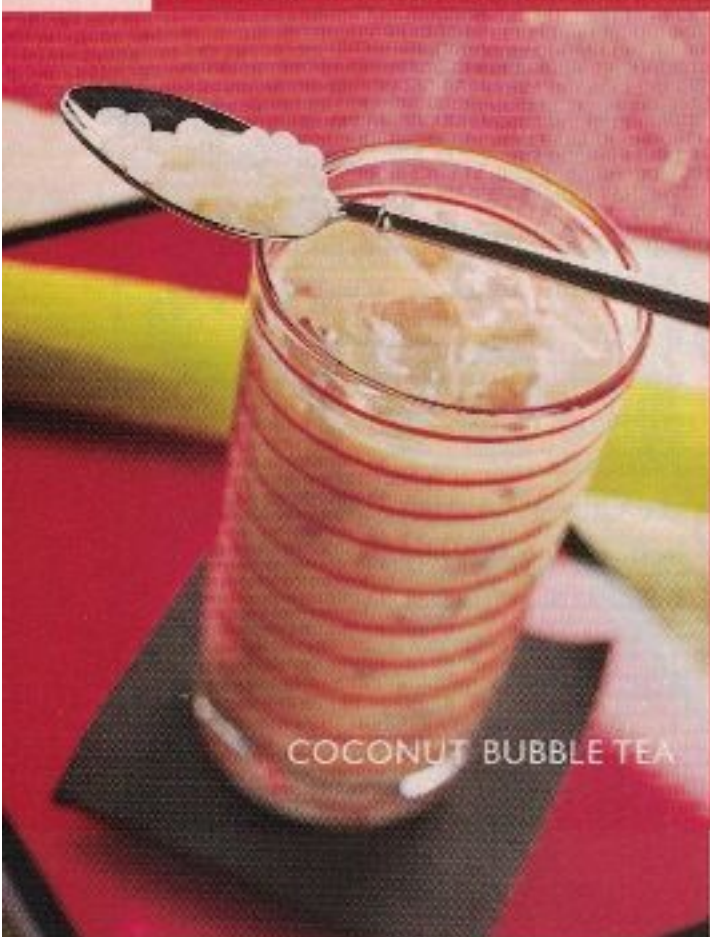
**1/2 cup large Chinese tapioca pearls**  
**2 Tbs. brown sugar**  
**1 cup crushed ice**  
**1 cup chilled very strong black or green tea**  
**1/2 cup regular or low-fat milk**  
**1/2 cup low-fat or regular coconut milk**

#### Honey to taste

1. Bring 3 1/2 cups water to a boil over medium heat, and add tapioca pearls. Boil for 30 to 45 minutes, or until pearls are turning translucent. Remove from heat, and let sit in hot water for 30 minutes more. Drain, and rinse in warm water. Put pearls in a mixing bowl, add brown sugar and toss. Divide tapioca equally between 2 large serving glasses.

2. Mix together remaining ingredients, and shake. Pour mixture into the 2 glasses of tapioca pearls. Serve with large straws.

PER SERVING: 150 CAL; 2G PROT; 2.5G TOTAL FAT (1G SAT. FAT); 31G CARB; 5MG CHOL; 60MG SOD; 0G FIBER; 9G SUGARS



COCONUT BUBBLE TEA

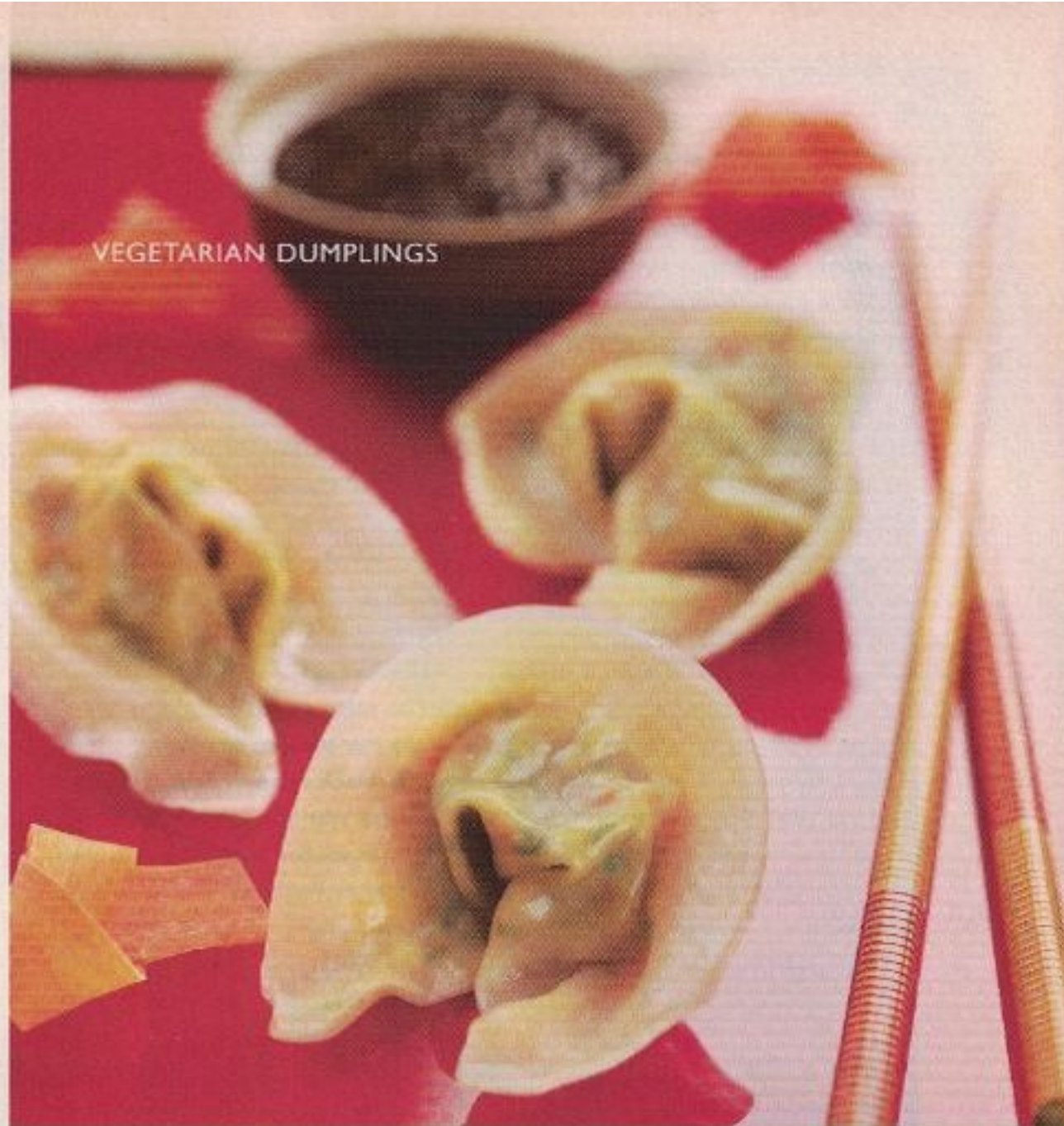
## Great Tea International's Lotus Leaf Rice Roll

SERVES 4

Asian markets sell dried lotus leaves in cellophane packets, and they require rehydration before using. Look for glutinous rice—also known as “sticky” rice—at well-stocked Asian markets. A popular rice from Southeast Asia, glutinous rice has large, opaque grains that cling together when prepared. It is best cooked in a steamer, not directly in water, so use a vegetable steamer or the traditional Asian woven basket set over water. Cook the rice, covered, over boiling water for about 30 minutes, or until the grains are tender. Japanese sushi rice is not a substitute because it does not have the same sticky consistency. This recipe makes 12 rolls.

**3 whole lotus leaves, rehydrated**  
**12 fresh or dried shiitake mushrooms**  
**1½ cups raw glutinous (sticky) rice**  
**2 cups sliced bamboo shoots**  
**1½ cups warm water**  
**1 Tbs. low-sodium soy sauce**  
**2 tsp. salt**  
**1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper**

1. Soak lotus leaves in water for 20 minutes. Soak dried shiitake mushrooms, if using, in boiling water for 30 minutes to reconstitute, and cut into thin strips when soft. Alternatively, wash fresh shiitake mushrooms, and cut into thin strips.
2. Rinse rice in warm water in a large bowl 3 or 4 times, or until water runs clear. Steam rice until tender, for about 30 minutes.
3. Mix mushrooms, bamboo shoots, 1½ cups water, soy sauce, salt and black pepper thoroughly into rice. Add sesame oil to mixture, but do not stir, as oil will permeate mixture.
4. Meanwhile, use a clean dishcloth or paper towel to wipe off soaked lotus leaves. Cut each of the leaves into 4 small pieces, and place flat on work surface.
5. Divide cooked rice mixture into 12 equal portions. Make rolls by placing rice mixture on one end of leaf. Fold sides in



VEGETARIAN DUMPLINGS

over filling, tucking leaf in tightly and rolling carefully. Tuck ends underneath.

6. Place rolls in a steamer, and steam for 10 minutes, or until heated through. Remove from steamer, and serve.

PER SERVING: 110 CAL; 3G PROT; 1.5G TOTAL FAT (0G SAT. FAT); 22G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 430MG SOD; 2G FIBER; 2G SUGARS

### Vegetarian Dumplings

SERVES ABOUT 10

This recipe relies on fresh garlic and fresh ginger as well as Chinese hoisin sauce to flavor the vegetable mixture. If you use a food processor to mince the ingredients, avoid overprocessing it or the mixture will turn to mush. You may fry the dumplings in a large skillet instead of boiling them. Allow about 4 dumplings per serving.

### Dumplings

**2 large carrots, cut into chunks**  
**8 oz. firm tofu**  
**7 dried black Chinese mushrooms,**

**soaked in hot water to rehydrate**  
**½ lb. spinach, rinsed and trimmed**  
**6 large leaves Chinese or American cabbage, trimmed**  
**2 cloves garlic**  
**½ bunch cilantro, rinsed and trimmed**  
**1 large egg, beaten**  
**1 Tbs. minced fresh ginger**  
**2 Tbs. low-sodium soy sauce**  
**3 Tbs. cornstarch**  
**2 Tbs. hoisin sauce**  
**1 Tbs. sesame oil**  
**1 to 3 tsp. salt, or to taste**  
**50 3-inch-round wonton wrappers**

### Dipping Sauce

**3 Tbs. low-sodium soy sauce**  
**1 Tbs. rice vinegar**  
**1 Tbs. sesame oil**  
**½ Tbs. chili sauce**

1. To make Dumplings: Dry carrots, tofu, mushrooms, spinach, cabbage, garlic and cilantro thoroughly, and put into food

processor, and chop very finely. Put vegetable mixture into a large bowl.

2. Mix together egg, ginger, soy sauce, cornstarch, hoisin sauce, sesame oil and salt. Stir egg mixture into bowl with vegetable mixture. Drain any excess liquid from mixture.

3. Place dumpling wrappers, one at a time, on flat work surface. Place a spoonful of mixture on center, brush water around edges of wrapper and crimp shut to seal. Repeat process until all ingredients are used up.

4. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add dumplings, 12 at a time to water, and cook for about 4 minutes, or until dumplings float to surface. Use a slotted skimmer to remove from water, and set aside in a bowl. Keep from touching while still hot or dumplings may stick.

5. To make Dipping Sauce: Combine all ingredients, mixing well, and set aside.

6. To serve, arrange Dumplings on a platter, and pass with Dipping Sauce.

PER SERVING: 210 CAL; 8G PROT; 5G TOTAL FAT (1G SAT. FAT); 33G CARB; 25MG CHOL; 770MG SOD; 2G FIBER; 2G SUGARS

### Ching Ching Cha's Marbled Tea Eggs

SERVES 12

Put star anise, peppercorns and tea leaves in a small cheesecloth bag before using. Otherwise these may cling to the eggs as they cook. Cooked eggs can keep for several days in the refrigerator.

**12 large eggs**

**1 Tbs. salt**

**2 tsp. low-sodium soy sauce**

**2 Tbs. black peppercorns**

**6 pieces star anise**

**2 Tbs. black tea leaves, such as Earl**

**Grey or Keemun**

**8 cups water**

**1 tsp. sesame oil**

**2 Tbs. low-sodium soy sauce**

1. Place eggs in a saucepan of cold water, and bring to a boil over medium heat for 10 minutes. Remove from heat, drain and soak eggs in cold water to cool. When cool enough to handle, gently tap eggs until each shell is covered with small cracks but is not broken.

2. Put eggs in a saucepan with salt, soy sauce, peppercorns, star anise, tea leaves and 8 cups water. Bring to a boil over medium heat, reduce heat to very low and cook covered for 1 hour. Remove eggs from heat, and let eggs soak in liquid for 2 hours without removing cover.

3. Serve eggs cold or at room temperature, and pass with mixture of sesame oil and soy sauce for seasoning.

PER SERVING: 80 CAL; 6G PROT; 6G TOTAL FAT (1.5G SAT. FAT); 1G CARB; 210MG CHOL; 330MG SOD; 0G FIBER; 1G SUGARS

### Ching Ching Cha's Five Spices Peanuts

SERVES 16

This easy recipe transforms ordinary peanuts into a delectable snack.

**1 lb. dry-roasted large peanuts**

**4 pieces star anise**

**2 tsp. five spice powder**

**1 Tbs. salt**

**2 tsp. granulated sugar**

**4 cups water**

1. Put all ingredients in a large saucepan, and bring mixture to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat to low, and cook for 30 minutes, uncovered.

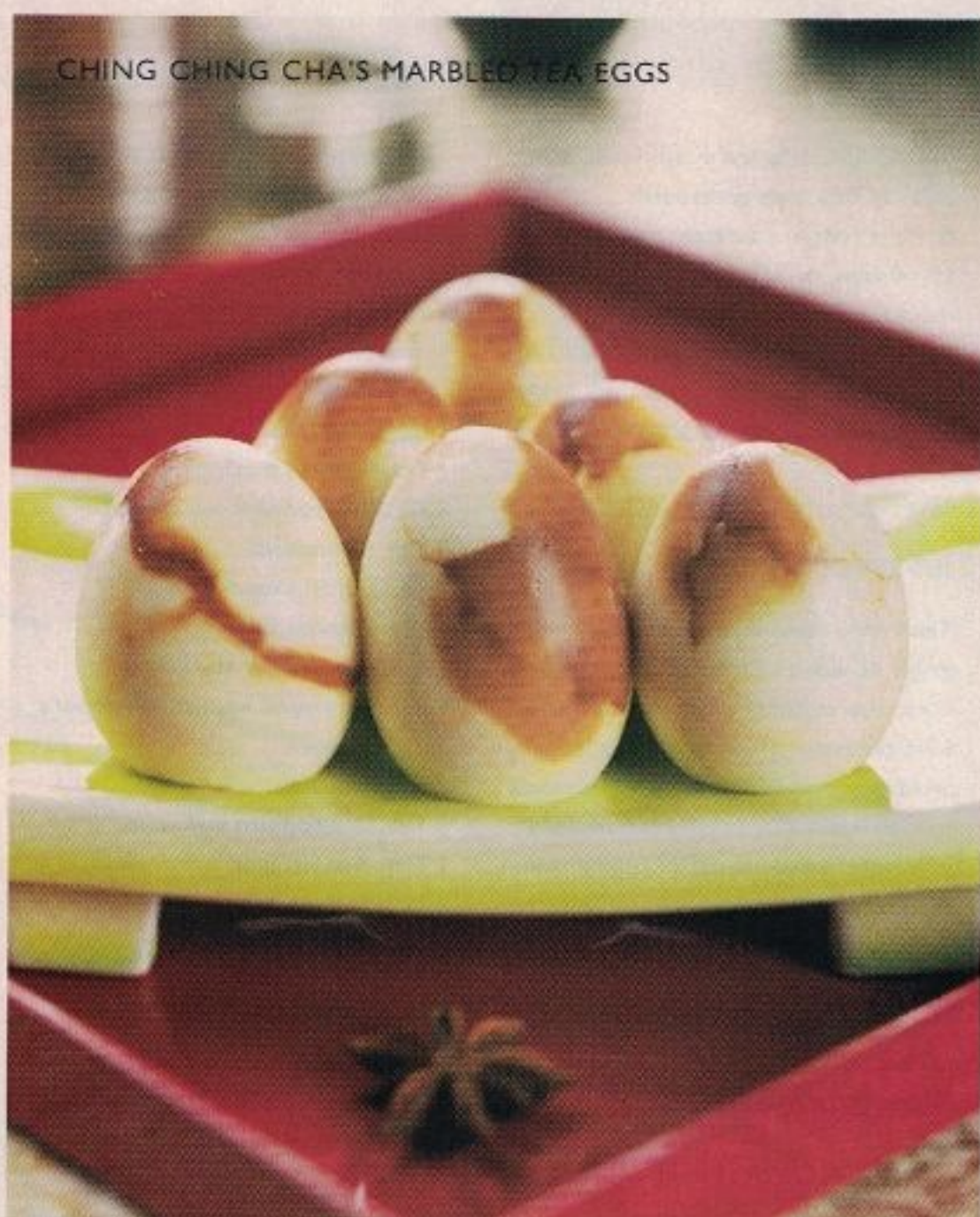
2. Remove from heat, strain peanuts and reserve liquid. Set peanuts aside to cool. Serve peanuts with several tablespoons reserved liquid.

PER SERVING: 170 CAL; 7G PROT; 14G TOTAL FAT (2G SAT. FAT); 6G CARB; 0MG CHOL; 150MG SOD; 2G FIBER; 2G SUGARS

### Pineapple Cake from Great Tea International

SERVES 8

This luscious pineapple cake is easy to make, and it is a light accompaniment to



CHING CHING CHA'S MARBLED TEA EGGS



PINEAPPLE CAKE from GREAT TEA INTERNATIONAL

any tea so it doesn't interfere with the flavor of the tea. Although using canned pineapple is very easy, you may want to try cubes cut from a fresh pineapple.

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, at room temperature
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1 cup regular milk
- 1/4 cup pineapple chunks, drained

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Spray an 8-inch round or square cake pan with nonstick cooking spray, and coat it lightly with flour. Set aside.

2. Beat butter with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add sugar, and continue to beat well for 3 to 5 minutes, or until light and fluffy. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating mixture well after each addition.

3. Stir flour, salt, baking powder and milk to egg mixture in mixing bowl, adding each ingredient 1 at a time. Stir pineapple in by hand, taking care not to overbeat. Pour mixture into prepared pan.

4. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from oven, and allow cake to cool in pan for 5 to 10 minutes. Transfer cake onto a cooling rack. Slice, and serve when cake has cooled completely.

PER SERVING: 300 CAL; 5G PROT; 14G TOTAL FAT (7G SAT. FAT); 40G CARB; 85MG CHOL; 240MG SOD; <1G FIBER; 21G SUGARS

## Tea Time

For information about teas and tea-drinking locations, check out [www.teasociety.org](http://www.teasociety.org) or [www.teamap.com](http://www.teamap.com).

**Ching Ching Cha**  
1063 Wisconsin Ave., NW  
Washington, DC  
202.333.8288

**Franchia**  
12 Park Avenue  
New York, NY  
212.213.1001

**Great Tea International**  
1724 Sansom St.  
Philadelphia, PA  
215.568.7827