

MONA SHROFF

then, now,  
*Always*

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## ***RECIPES***

### ***CILANTRO CHUTNEY***

CHUTNEY IS ONE of those things that you can't possibly get wrong. Proof of this is in my real-life story of being assigned to make chutney by my mother-in-law shortly after I was married. I had no idea how to make chutney, but I remembered a few things I had seen my mother do. I didn't want to admit my lack of knowledge, so I simply asked my mother-in-law how *she* made chutney, because my mom added such and such ingredients. I believe my mother-in-law saw right through me, but kindly played along. I fumbled along, and threw ingredients into a blender, and voilà, chutney! It was so yummy, I became the family chutney maker. Bear that in mind as you make your own, unique chutney!

*2–3 handfuls of cilantro, washed  
(wash by floating in a medium-sized bowl, so all the  
sand etc. sinks to the bottom and the cilantro floats  
to the top)*

*1–2 handfuls of salted, roasted nuts of choice  
(peanut, almonds, cashews—whatever you like)  
Cashews will make the chutney creamier, if that's  
what you like—I do! I am currently using cashews.*

*3–5 cloves of garlic, peeled  
(not from a jar or frozen—use fresh!)*

*Lemon juice*

*½–1 finely chopped jalapeño pepper  
(depends on the heat of the pepper, as well as how  
spicy you want the chutney)*

*Salt (to taste)*

1. Place cilantro, nuts, garlic and jalapeño (start with ½) into a blender or smoothie maker of your choice. You may have to add a bit of water. Blend until it is the consistency you like. If it is not coming together, add a bit more water.
2. Add lemon juice. A couple squirts from a bottle, or the juice of half a lemon if using fresh. Mix.
3. Taste it. Does it need salt? Add a pinch or two. Mix.
4. Taste it again. Does it feel like something is missing? Add a bit more lemon juice. Mix.

Serve with samosa. Or use as a spread in a chutney sandwich. Add sliced cucumber, sliced tomato and sliced onion. If you like, add a slice of cheese. I prefer the sandwich on toasted bread to avoid sogginess.

## *CHAI*

MAYA SERVES CHAI when Hema visits the bakery looking for forgiveness. It's a cold day, and the warm spices and milk make this a comforting drink on such a day. I chose chai in the scene as opposed to coffee, for many reasons. Not the least of which is that the coffee scent is associated with Sam.

But I mostly chose chai because a bit of effort is required to make it, and I have always associated the smell of chai with family. When I was growing up, my mom would make chai when all the family was together in the summer. She would add fresh mint, and that aroma still takes me back to those carefree days. When I first got married, my in-laws seemed to love when I made chai, and it always made me feel loved and part of my new family.

By the end of this scene, Hema and Maya have started their journey as part of a family, so chai just seemed the right choice of drink.

The thing to know about chai is that it's a very individual thing, like coffee. People have preferences for how they take their chai. Some like it strong and dark, while others prefer a more milky tea. Sweetness is always an issue. You can avoid this by simply not adding sugar while it boils, and allowing everyone to add their own sugar. Some like it spicy, some like it mild.

The best way to figure out what you like is to simply try different versions and see which you like the best.

The differences in some chai start with the makeup of the chai masala (spice mixture that makes chai *chai*). The basic ingredients are cinnamon, cardamom, peppercorn, nutmeg, cloves and ginger. Chai masala can be bought or homemade. I use homemade versions from my mother and mother-in-law.

I personally enjoy chai in the summer when fresh mint grows. I add the fresh mint before I add milk. Very refreshing! Some people will also add fresh grated ginger at this juncture—also yummy!

I imagine that when Maya makes chai for Hema, she adds just a bit more spice as it is a cold day outside, and the strong aroma and taste is warming and comforting. Here is a basic chai recipe. As I said, variations occur!

1. Fill a small/medium pot with enough water for about 2 cups of chai (this amount depends on the size of your cup).
2. Add 2–3 spoons of tea, and about 1 small spoon of chai masala (more if you like more spice, less if you prefer less spice).
3. Let the mixture come to a soft boil.
4. Add milk until the chai is the color you like (less milk if you like strong chai, more if you like a milkier flavor).
5. Add sugar to taste.

6. Allow this mixture to come to a rolling boil. *Do not step away from the mixture at this juncture, as it may boil over!*
7. Once the mixture has boiled a bit, turn off the stove and strain the chai into two cups. Makes chai for two.