

Cooking with Elevation

VEGAN TEA ICE CREAM

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We love cooking with tea here at the Center. We'd love to share more recipes here in the future. This month, we thought we would share a wonderful treat, taking a pause from our regularly scheduled gongfu tea experiments to make some delicious Elevation ice cream. It doesn't take much tea to make, so if you don't have any Elevation already, you could quite honorably use a bit from your tin to make a treat! Let us know how it goes. And contact us with your own tea recipes, or with any recipes you'd like to see us cover, including any favorite dishes you might have been served for lunch here at the Center.





Elevation often feels like the beginning and the end for me. I'm sure I have drunk this tea more than any other tea on the planet. Some of my deepest tea experiences have come through drinking this tea, and during some of the simplest moments She was there as well. During my year-long practice of sitting for three bowls every morning, Elevation was with me every step of the way. After returning from the annual Global Tea Hut trip to Wuyi I thought that I had drunk the best tea I would ever try, but during my first session back it was Elevation that offered more insight than any we had drunk on that trip! Elevation is the tea I put in a mug to help me write these articles. She is the tea I watch people brew for their first time every week at the Center. Whenever I travel, I always carry a bag of Her to give to those along the road. I have touched the soil She grows in and sat beneath Her canopy with the moss and spiders. This tea is more a part of me than any other—or is it that I am more a part of Her? I am never quite sure. We share this life.

This month, in lieu of a gongfu experiment we thought we would share a dessert idea using this month's tea. Elevation is a great tea to cook with. She has depth and flavor, is organic and sustainable yet readily available and economical. We often use her for kombucha, and every so often will try to find a way to use her in a meal! Tea is edible, and was a medicinal herb for such a large part of Chinese history and prehistory that using Her in meals just makes sense!

As with all recipes, this one is merely an invitation to make it on your own. It seems that too often people are looking for a step-by-step guide for everything. We seem to believe that if you do as you are told, things will turn out the way they should. In my experience, nothing ever turns out as I think it should. (Perhaps that *is* exactly how it should turn out!) I rarely follow recipes. You need to learn to taste and smell—only then will you truly learn to cook.

The same for tea. There are no recipes to making the perfect cup. That's why we offer these experiments every

month, so that you try, discover, learn and grow in your understanding of tea. If we learn to give our attention to the process and ingredients, in both cooking and tea, day by day, plate by plate, cup by cup, we improve. Instead of scales, we learn to use our eyes and hands. Instead of clocks or timers, we learn to see when the food is ready. As Zen Master Tenkei said, "Touch with your hands, see with your eyes, smell with your nose, taste with your tongue..." This is all there is. This is the only true recipe you need.

While we will give you a recipe for this month, remember to pay attention while you cook. Don't be afraid to experiment! Trust your observations and perceptions—no doubt you will still end up with a delicious dish. We all need to cultivate a trust of our inherent good-heartedness and our capacity to sense and know for ourselves what life requires of us, or at least I know I do! So, let's have fun with this recipe (it is ice cream, after all); and then share our ideas with the community.

Vegan Elevation Ice Cream

6 large frozen bananas, peeled and roughly chopped

Handful of this month's tea, Elevation

Can of coconut cream

1 large pinch Himalayan crystal salt

Almonds

Honey/maple syrup

Raisins/goji berries

The night before:

The main issue with this dish is getting the correct texture. You need to steep the tea in something, but if you do it in water, the ice cream will have too much liquid in it. I overcame this by separating the fats and liquids of coconut cream. To do this, you will need to place a can of coconut cream in the fridge overnight.

Put all the bananas in an airtight bag or container and put them into the freezer overnight.

Step 1: Gently grind the tea in a mortar and pestle. You can decide how thick or powdered you would like it.

Step 2: Take out the coconut cream, being careful not to shake it. Open the can. On top, there will be a thick layer of coconut fat, which you need to scoop out. Don't mix it with the water left at the bottom. (You can use the remainder in a smoothie or when cooking your oats! *On a side note: if you add a little maple syrup to this coconut fat and beat it, you can use it as a cream replacement on cakes.*) This thick layer is normally about a third to a half of the total contents of the can.

Step 3: Heat the coconut fat on the stove. You will need to keep the temperature low and stir constantly so it does not burn. Once it starts to bubble, add the powdered tea, turn the heat off and continue to stir for a few minutes as it cools. Then, place it in a bowl off to the side. Once it's cool enough, you can put it in the fridge.

Step 4: Turn the oven to broil. In a bowl, mix the almonds, a drizzle of honey and a dash of coconut oil (you can use maple syrup if you don't like honey). Mix it all thoroughly. Then, place it in the oven close to the top. Leave the oven door open and do not go anywhere! The nuts will burn easily. Make sure to shake the tray every minute or so. You will know by smell when they are ready. Take them out and put aside to cool.

Step 5: Take your bananas from the freezer. Place them in a blender with some salt and your Elevation coconut cream. This part takes time: You really need to blend it until it is thick and smooth and has the consistency of creamy, delicious ice cream! Be patient and cooperate with the blender.

Step 6: This dish is best served right out of the blender, although you can put it in the freezer for thirty minutes or so. To plate it, scoop the ice cream into bowls. Cover with nuts and goji berries.

Step 7: Enjoy!

Step 8: *Take a photo of your Elevation ice cream and share it with us!*

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