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The Tao of chai

The tea-derived beverage chai is available at many cafes near campus, but anyone can make it at home with the right ingredients

Reporter's notebook

Aaron Shakra
Pulse Reporter

The story of chai is somewhat revisionist, but some things can be ascertained from a little research. First and foremost, it's a generic word for "tea" in many parts of the world. This means there's no one exemplar or standard that the tea should meet; in other words, a unique creation will always result.

Chai has been actively used throughout its history and has strong roots in Indian Ayurvedic healing, one of the oldest systems of medicine on the planet. Ayurveda uses combined methods of herbs, foods, aromas, gems, colors, yoga, mantras, lifestyle and surgery for healing the body.

In recent years, chai has become quite popular, and is now offered in all sorts of coffee shops and cafes. It's positioned somewhere between hot chocolate and the multifarious forms of coffee as a kind of dessert or specialty drink. Not all varieties of chai are created equal, though, and this is perhaps a good thing. Some kinds are better than others, but almost all of them are worth trying.

There are at least four different varieties around campus. Holy Cow Cafe in the EMU has its own brew; a 16-ounce serving runs an economical \$1.50. India House, a longtime food vendor that's a staple at places such as the Saturday Market, comes to the EMU on Mondays, and offers its own variant. It's a little more expensive — costing \$2.50 for a 16-ounce cup — and a bit sweeter than Holy Cow's stuff.

Espresso Roma Cafe and Starbucks Coffee both offer mainstream variants of chai. Starbucks uses Tazo Chai, which is quite sweet but packs a punch in the flavor department, especially when it comes to the vanilla. Espresso Roma, on the other hand, uses Oregon Chai. Both of these brands are acceptable, but end up being the most expensive where they're offered. The Buzz Coffeehouse in the EMU and The Duck Shop! Espresso Bar in the University Bookstore serve Oregon Chai, as well.

Perugino is a new cafe that recently opened at 767 Willamette St. It's a fancy place, with good presentation value, but charges an exorbitant sum of nearly \$4 for a 16-ounce cup of Oregon Chai.

Away from campus, the best bet for a good cup is Out of the Fog Organic Coffeehouse, located at 450 Willamette St. The chai is, again, a unique mixture and is optionally sweetened with maple syrup.

Customers can choose from soy, rice or cow's milk.

The option also exists to make your own. Last year, I was handed down a recipe combining a bunch of other recipes, to make, if you will, the "ultimate" chai.

The list of ingredients are as follows: cardamom seeds, cumin seeds, cinnamon, whole cloves, black peppercorns, nutmeg, flower of mace, ginger, allspice, anise or fennel and vanilla. I've found a little orange peel used sparingly will kick the brew into overdrive. These items can be

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Photo illustration Emerald



'Caricature' illustrates stories with wit, irony

Book review

Helen Schumacher
Pulse Reporter

"Caricature" is Daniel Clowes' comic-book version of J.D. Salinger's "Nine Stories." Like "Ghost World," possibly Clowes' most famous work, "Caricature" is taken from his long-running comic series "Eightball."

A collection of — you guessed it — nine stories, "Caricature" masterfully blends literary and visual

art to create a sublime glimpse of the loner.

The best story of the book is "The Gold Mommy," which begins with a non-descript man named Yerkes getting his hair trimmed at a barber shop. Halfway through the trim, Yerkes realizes he forgot his money. The barber stops mid-haircut and sends Yerkes out to get money, but takes his shoes and socks as collateral.

Sent out barefoot, Yerkes searches the gritty city night for a place to cash an out-of-state check. Randomly, he ends up at

his deceased father's former office. Inside, Yerkes finds a photo of his dad with a family he has never seen before. From there, things get odder and odder, and "The Gold Mommy" becomes a riddle with no solution.

Although all of Clowes' work is a far cry from the pages of "Spider-Man" or "X-Men," he gives the superhero genre a try with "Black Nylon."

"Black Nylon" follows an aging hero as he visits a diner, deposits his check in the bank, talks with his

shrink, and heads into a cave that becomes the scene of his demise.

Clowes has an eye for detail and uses it to add texture to the stories. From tales of a man obsessed with the year 1966 to a gynecologist making a name for himself as a lounge singer, the stories depict sad, hollow everyday events through pensive eyes. Not that the stories are depressing; they're witty and, like the medium itself, ironic.

Contact the Pulse reporter at
henschumacher@dailyemerald.com.