



FOR RAIL PHOTOGRAPHY HOLGA BENNETT, SERVING DISHES, CUPS AND SAUCERS FROM MID AUSTRALIA, GLASS TEAPOT AND FRENCH CUP, GREY TEA, TEA URLED (IN CENTRE) FROM CHALIMAH JEANNE, CHAMOMILE TEA FROM SCULLERY MADE TEA, ALL OTHER PROPS, STYLING: SOWIN. FOR STOCKIST DETAILS, SEE PAGE 136.



infused with love

TEA LENDS ITSELF TO DELICIOUS NEW IDEAS YOU CAN CREATE YOURSELF.

WORDS AND STYLING PIA JANE BIJKERK PHOTOGRAPHY CRAIG WALL

I **DISTINCTLY** remember my first sip of tea when I was little, visiting my grandparents one Sunday afternoon. At my request, my grandfather poured me a cup from the teapot as I was sitting at their kitchen table, watching him potter around while my grandmother was busy making a Sunday roast. It was a sweet, milky cup of black tea, and it instilled a love and a curiosity that has lasted ever since.

As the years have gone by, I've been exploring the world of tea. About a decade ago, I opened a teahouse, catering to the locals but mostly to my own desire to taste teas from around the globe. I soon discovered my favourite was the delectable Indian chai, which I brewed with milk and honey in tall glass teapots.

I'm fascinated with everything tea-related, including cups, strainers (I adore the old Chinese bamboo ones the most), pots, cosies, spoons and serving trays. I'm equally fascinated with tea makers, and am always searching for local and regional producers. Last year at one of our local markets I encountered the beautiful range made by Sydney medicinal herbalist Chalmah Jeanne. Her blends are unique and beautiful, using herbs and flowers such as rose petals, lemon balm, lavender, meadowsweet and lemongrass.

Lately, I've been musing over the idea of making some of my own sweet and simple herbal teas, using plants I've been growing in my back garden. At the moment I have lemongrass, mint, lavender and ginger growing bountifully, so I asked the talented tea maker Cherie Hausler from Scullery Made Tea (see Flavours, page 97) if she could offer some tips on how to make teas using these herbs. Cherie blends all her teas in South Australia's

Barossa Valley, using locally grown fruits and herbs, and combines them with the finest whole-leaf tea.

Her first fragment of valuable advice is to pick any leaf or grass in the morning when the essential oils are at their peak. To dry a freshly cut bunch, Cherie advises, "simply lay the fresh leaves in a single layer between a couple of pieces of muslin cloth and then place that over a cake rack. This will let the air circulate to dry the herbs and still keep as much of the colour as possible."

Depending on the season and where you place the herbs to dry, Cherie says they should be ready in three to four days. To test if they are ready, she suggests crumpling them between your fingers — if the leaves crush rather than fold, then they are ready for the pot.

After I finish this cup of tea, I'm heading out to the back garden to do some harvesting. If you feel inspired to do the same, make sure any plants used have not been sprayed with pesticide.

To learn more about making your own tea, including tips from Cherie about creating flavour profiles, head online to the websites listed below. *

PIA'S LINK LOVE

For more tea appreciation tips, visit:

- 1 www.chalimahjeanne.com.au
- 2 www.scullerymadetea.com
- 3 www.belloq.com
- 4 www.teawithlucy.blogspot.com.au
- 5 www.emersonmerrick.blogspot.com

Pia is Country Style's resident blogger at blogs.homelife.com.au/countrystyle