My Late-to-the-Game Obsession With Matcha Knocked Coffee Off Its Pedestal

Written by Madeleine Deliee on January 23, 2019

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A couple of months ago, I finally had to come to grips with a bitter truth: After a lifetime of carefree enjoyment, my 40ish-year-old gut had rebelled against milk products and an alternative was extremely necessary. Thus, began the trial and error of dairy substitutes. It turns out I hate most options, but unsweetened almond milk is acceptable (if you're interested, I do not recommend or endorse the almond-coconut combination). So, solution found—perfect, right? Yes, except for one detail: I do not like almond milk in coffee, and morning caffeine is non-negotiable.

Enter the matcha latte. I know, I know: Matcha is so last year (or even, if you're super-influencer-like, 2017). I am, admittedly, late to the party—but no less enthusiastic for my tardiness. It has achieved that which I thought impossible: knocked coffee off its a.m. pedestal.

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The Beginning of My Matcha Love Affair

First, matcha is so freakin' pretty. I don't take pictures of my food, mostly because I'm too busy eating it, but if I did, I am confident there would be a ridiculous number of verdant tea drinks on my social media. That beautiful bright green hue perks me up in a way

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shirt—a bright green stain being even more noticeable than a dull brown one—but until that time, I'm going to enjoy the macaron-like vibrancy.

Speaking of vibrancy—wow! I don't know whether it's psychosomatic, but my energy while on matcha is spot on. I'm energized—but not jittery—all day. Granted, this is partly due to my habit of nursing my a.m. drink until approximately 3 p.m., but still. I teach teenagers. Anything that gives me the surge to handle them for seven-and-a-half hours, is still legal, and doesn't leave me with the shakes has to be good.

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Teenagers not only populate my place of work, there is also one in residence at my house. He drinks my coffee, which I can't find much fault with because he starts school before he's awake, and he already towers over me in height, which kills the "you'll stunt your growth" argument. Despite his affinity for very sweet coffee, however, he has no use whatsoever for my matcha. It is mine, all mine, mwah ha ha ha. This means that when I buy it, I know it's still sitting in the cabinet—unless I used it up myself.

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Yes, I discovered matcha through Peet's (which led, inevitably, as the road to degradation does, to Starbucks) and then I backed away quickly and protectively. I could either get my matcha fix served in a pretty paper cup by an aproned barista, or I could consider sending my children to college. Both would not be possible, especially once the almond milk entered the spreadsheet. But a $10-bag of matcha powder and a $7 battery-operated foamer thingy later, my homemade version is both reasonably budget-friendly and taste-equivalent. I also found out the hard way that I need a small amount of honey in there as well. Unsweetened matcha is a tough wake-up.

Even with my honey-doctoring, the temptation to be a holier-than-thou matcha drinker is strong. It's got so many impressive-sounding health benefits: There are antioxidants, anti-carcinogens, and anti-plaque compounds to prevent heart disease. It may help liver function, increase energy without the crash associated with coffee—I wasn't imagining it!—and boost fat-burning metabolism. I almost feel like my morning drink negates my other, less-virtuous habits, like staying up too late and eating French fries. I sip my sort-of-good-for-me drink and believe that I am making a step in the direction of Best Self (whatever that is).

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I avoid being an obnoxious jerk about it, though, because of Yerba Mate Guy. Several years ago, I had a class with an unbearably pretentious guy who had this elaborate set-up for his yerba mate, and he'd ostentatiously go through the whole routine every time we met. The mere mention of involving a bamboo whisk to prepare my matcha reminded me of Mr. D-Bag, and I thought, *I can't be that person*. But, purist disdain notwithstanding, it turns out I can get by just fine with nothing more than my mug, the aforementioned foamer thingy, and my personal feelings of smug self-righteousness.

I haven't given up all coffee—I won't be the person who totes her own matcha along for brunch, and I like a cup when eating something sweet. It's just that now, to my surprise, I'm a most-mornings-matcha drinker. Better late than never.

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