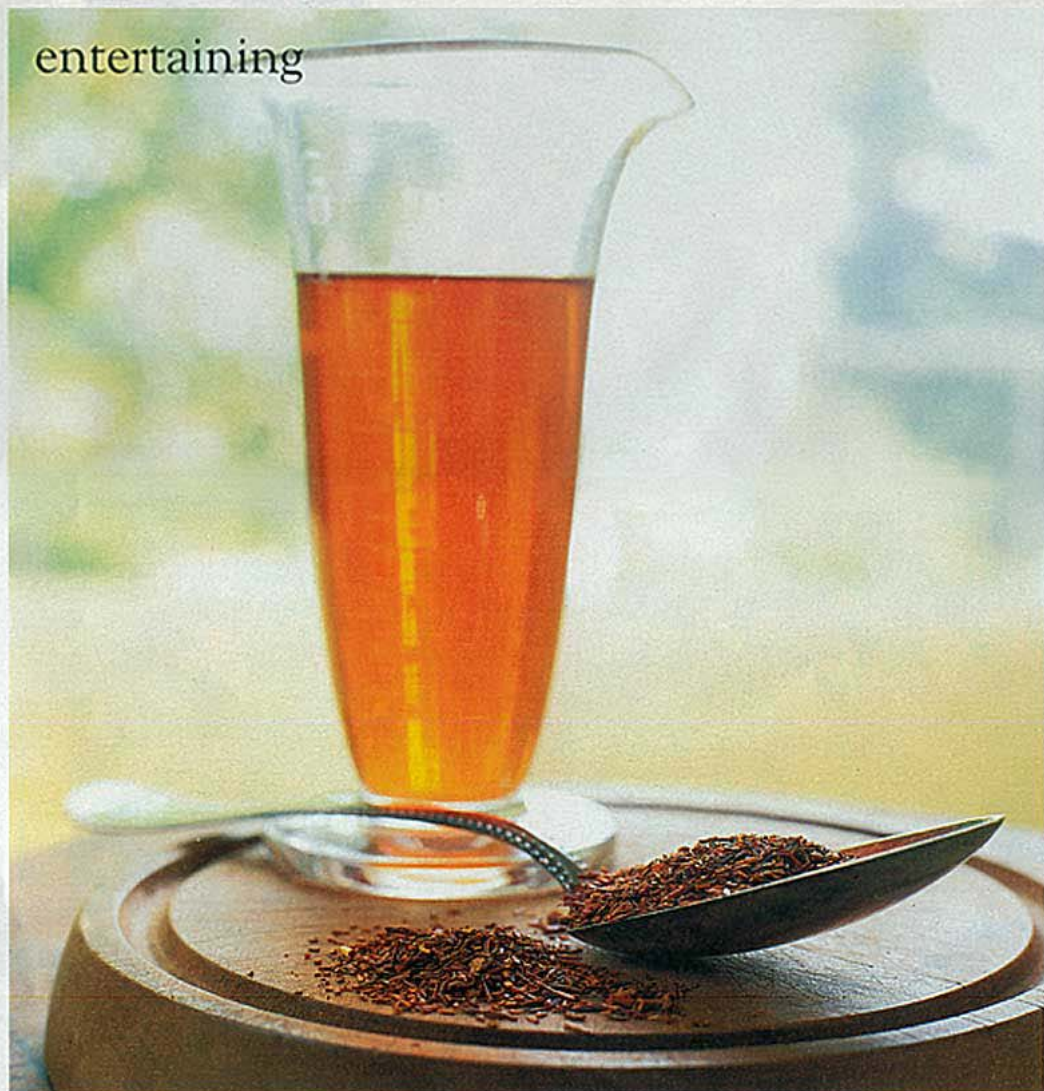


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entertaining



Rooibos Banana Spice Bread

Yields 2 loaves

- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 cup frozen orange juice concentrate
- 1 cup strong Chai Rooibos tisane
- 2 eggs
- 2 ripe bananas
- 1 cup currants or raisins
- 1 cup walnuts, chopped

Grease and flour two 8 1/2-by-4 1/2-inch loaf pans. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and sea salt in a bowl and set aside. Blend orange juice concentrate, tisane, eggs and bananas in blender until well mixed. Pour over dry ingredients. Add currants and walnuts and stir until blended.

Carefully spoon into greased and floured loaf pan and bake for 30-45 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes before removing from pan.

Wake-Up Call

The Herbal Tisane Rooibos Is a Healthier Alternative to Coffee—and It Isn't Just for Drinking

I love coffee. I can't possibly start the morning without a latte, but I am concerned about its effect on my health. As far as I know, coffee supplies no antioxidants, and its stimulant properties probably aren't all that great for the heart.

I wish I enjoyed tea even half as much, especially after all the recent articles touting its potential cancer-fighting properties. A chance visit to a tea emporium in Los Angeles may have provided the solution. Instead of drinking my daily cup of tea, I can cook with it. And not just any tea, but Rooibos.

Rooibos—the name means "red bush" in Afrikaans—comes from South Africa. I found it locally at Rooibos Tea House in West Hollywood, where owners Michael Broomberg and Nira Levy Maslin, South African and Israeli ex-pats, import the highest quality available. "We use the pine needle-like bits of the plant," Broomberg says, explaining that's where the beneficial antioxidant components

are stored in the greatest quantity. "Most other companies throw in the stems."

Technically, Rooibos (pronounced Roy-bos) isn't tea; it's a tisane, which means it doesn't come from *Camellia sinensis*, the actual tea plant. Like all tisanes—tea-like drinks made from steeping various herbs or spices in boiling water—Rooibos is an herbal tea, naturally caffeine-free and is super high in antioxidants. Rooibos is mild in flavor, so it's often combined with black cumin seeds and other ingredients. Maslin uses the stuff in practically everything she cooks—this tea is practically a religion for the couple. She particularly recommends it for preparing rice, carrot soup and banana bread. Plain Rooibos does not add a strong taste of its own, but mostly enhances the existing flavors.

And they aren't the only ones in town cooking with Rooibos. Over at Hugo's (both the original in

West Hollywood and the new branch in the Studio City), where the tea list on the menu stretches on for page after page, owner Tom Kaplan says he has used Rooibos in pancakes, partly for the flavor it lends and partly for the health benefits. He's also been known to pour some vanilla hazelnut Yogi Tea into the batter for a kick of spicy flavor. And David Myers, chef at newly opened Sona, features a Chai emulsion in his roasted Moroccan squash soup, taking advantage of the harmonious flavors from the classic Indian tisane, which is made from cinnamon, cardamom, cloves, ginger and black pepper, to enhance his dish.

With tea and tisanes showing up on more L.A. menus, I should have no problem finding ways to consume my daily tea. —CHRIS RUBIN

Chris Rubin last wrote for the magazine about edible flowers.