

A hot drink with caffeine, without jitters

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T.J. McIntyre, left, and Duane Primozich. (Post / Glen Martin)

Boulder - For decades people drank coffee black, or with cream and sugar. Others took tea with milk or lemon. Then along came espresso, cappuccino and latte for java junkies, and mint, green tea and chai for their genteel counterparts.

This year TJ McIntyre and Duane Primozich introduce Pixie Mate, which rhymes with latte, but isn't coffee, although it has caffeine.

Those who have been there say mate; is consumed as fervently in South America as that frothy coffee drink is in New York, Rome and Denver.

In Denver, teens drink traditional maté at Kaladi Brothers Coffee Shop on East Evans Avenue. Pixie Maté is served at all three Tattered Cover coffee bar locations, and in several Boulder-area cafes, including Cafe Zembo, Wonderland Cafe, Pekoe Tea House, Cafe Sole and Fresh Grains. The new line of plain and flavored maté drinks is sold at Vitamin Cottage and Wild Oats.

Not to worry if you've never heard of maté. McIntyre and Primozich had never heard of it either until Primozich hooked up with a soccer team a few years ago. The team was made up of guys from different countries, including several from South America.

"They were always sipping on this drink they said gave them energy, and I decided to try it," Primozich says. "It's like a time-release formula without the pharmaceuticals. It's a kind of euphoric stimulant but without side effects. In South America, notably Brazil and Paraguay, but particularly Argentina, everyone drinks it."

Fabulous. But what is it? The enterprising Boulderites say it's a healthy alternative to coffee.

Nice. But what is it? "You can drink it all day long and not get java jitters the way you would with coffee," adds Primozich.

Sorry guys. The question is,

What is mate?

McIntyre explains that it comes from *Ilex Paraguayansis*, a tree that grows wild in the rain forests. McIntyre rips open a package and deposits about a half-cup of grayish-green, tiny confettilike leaf fragments. In another time, it could be something you would roll in paper and smoke with friends before setting out for a Rolling Stones concert.

Instead, this is the stuff of which the Argentine national drink is made. "Like the coffeehouses of the '50s and '60s, where people gathered to talk, discuss, argue and tell stories, maté is the focal point of a similarly shared ritual," McIntyre says.

maté is not only a healthy alternative to coffee, it is rich in vitamins A, C, E and B. In addition to calcium, iron, selenium and potassium, maté is said to contain the same phytochemicals found in extra-virgin olive oil.

"If you look at the level of antioxidants in a single serving of maté, it surpasses green tea, orange juice and broccoli," McIntyre says.

The hibiscus and lemon blends make refreshing iced drinks. The maté chai blends clove, ginger and cardamom that is lovely with a touch of honey. The mocha chocolate concentrate maté works just fine drizzled over ice cream or mixed with milk.