

wikiHow to Make Yerba Mate

Two Methods: [Traditional](#) [Alternatives](#) [Questions and Answers](#)

Mate (pronounced mah-teh) is a drink made by steeping dried leaves from the yerba mate plant^[1] in hot water. It was the Guarani Indians of South America who first discovered the rejuvenating qualities of yerba mate^[2] and now it's enjoyed in Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, parts of [Brazil](#), [Chile](#), eastern [Bolivia](#), Lebanon, Syria and Turkey. It tastes somewhat like [green tea](#), with hints of [tobacco](#) and oak. In order to fully enjoy mate, however, you must prepare it properly as outlined below.

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Ingredients

Yerba mate
Cold water
Hot, but not boiling, water

Method 1 of 2: Traditional

1 Obtain a gourd and *bombilla*. Mate is traditionally steeped and served in a hollow calabash gourd (itself called a mate) and drunk through a metal straw called a *bombilla* (pronounced bome-bee-ja). There are also mate cups made from metal, ceramic or wood. You can use a regular teacup, as well, but you'll definitely need the *bombilla*.

- A gourd being used for the first time should be cured, or else the first few drinks from it might be a little on the bitter side. Curing removes the soft inner tissues of the gourd and "seasons" the inside with the flavor of mate. Fill the gourd with boiling water almost to the metal rim (or to the top if there is no metal rim) and let it sit for 10 minutes. Then softly scrape the membrane out of the gourd with a metal spoon under running water (but do not remove the stem in the center).^[3] Finally, put the cleaned-out gourd in the sunlight for a day or two until it is completely dry.

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2 Pack the dry, loose yerba mate into the gourd just over half full.

3 Place your hand on the top of the half-filled gourd and turn it upside-down.

Shake the more powdery leaves to the top of the gourd with several flicks of the wrist. This helps to ensure that you don't suck in the powdery leaves through the *bombilla* later.

4 Turn the gourd almost completely on its side and give it several light shakes

back and forth. This action will bring the larger stems to the surface, which will help filter the powdery leaves later. Slowly and carefully tilt the gourd right side up so that the yerba mate remains in a lopsided pile on one side.

5 Insert the *bombilla* into the gourd.

Whether you add cool water before or after inserting the *bombilla* is a matter of personal or cultural preference. Either way, the cool water will help preserve the integrity of the mate.

- Put the *bombilla* in the empty space next to the pile, being careful not to disturb the arrangement. Bring the end of the *bombilla* to the bottom and against the wall, as far from the powdery tip of the pile as possible. Then add cold water into the empty space until just before it reaches the top of the pile and wait for it to be absorbed. Try to keep the powdery tip of the pile dry.
- Alternatively, pour cool water into the empty space until just before it reaches the top of the pile, and wait for it to be absorbed. Pack or gently tamp the slope of the pile; this packing helps the mate remain in this shape later on. Bring the end of the *bombilla* to the bottom and against the wall, as far from the powdery tip of the pile as possible.

6 Pour hot water into the empty space as you did with the cool water.

It is important that you use hot water (70–80 °C, 160–180 °F) not **boiling water**, as boiling water will make the mate bitter.

7 Drink from the *bombilla*.

Newcomers to mate tend to jiggle the *bombilla* and stir the herb. Resist this temptation, or you'll end up clogging the *bombilla* and allowing herb into the straw. Drink the entire mate when it's handed to you, don't just take a small sip and pass it back. You should hear a sound similar to when drinking soda with **straw**.

- In a group, the first brew is traditionally taken by the person who prepares the mate. If you are the server, drink the mate until there is no water left, then refill the gourd with hot water and pass it to the next person, sharing the same

bombilla.

- Keep refilling the gourd as it's passed around (one brew per person) until it loses its flavor (called *lavado* in Spanish, because the flavor is "washed out"); it should take ten refills, more or less (depending on the quality of the mate). The mound can be pushed to the opposite side of the gourd and refilled a few more times in order to fully extract the flavor.
- To signal that you don't want any more mate, give thanks to "el cebador" (the server). Remember only to give thanks after your last mate. Once you give thanks it will be understood that you do not want anymore.

8 **Clean the gourd (or whatever container you used) after you're done and leave it out to dry.** Containers made from organic materials may rot and your mate will taste accordingly.

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Method 2 of 2: Alternatives

The following preparation options are convenient, but the flavor may be markedly different than with the traditional technique. It's recommended that you try the traditional preparation, then experiment with the methods below until you get a similar flavor.

- In Paraguay the Yerba Mate is drank cold, replacing the hot water for water and ice, in some case with a mixture of herbs, and instead of the gourd, a cured cow horn is used to contain the yerba mate. This preparation is known as "Terere".
- In some places, like Argentina, mate is also sold in teabag form (called *mate cocido*) so it can be steeped like other teas (but still not in boiling water).
- You can also treat the yerba mate like any other loose tea; steep it in hot water (the amount depends on how strong you want it to be, you'll need to experiment) and then filter out the leaves before drinking.
- If you have a coffee press, you can prepare the mate with it. See [How to Use a French Press or Cafetiere](#).
- You can also make mate in a standard automatic coffee maker. Just put the mate where you would normally put the coffee grounds.
- If you find that you dislike the taste of the Yerba Mate, you can trade it for desiccated coconut and add warm milk instead of warm water. Good for children and sweet lovers in cold winters.

Questions and Answers

Be the first to ask a question about this topic:

What do you need to know? We'll do our best to find the answer.

Submit

Give us 3 minutes of knowledge!

Yes

No

Yes

No

Yes

No

Yes

No

Tips

- You can also add Fresh Mint leaves, or other aromatic plants directly in the water.
- For a sweeter drink, you can add some sugar or honey to the gourd before pouring in the hot water.
- In some parts of South America, the peel of citrus fruits (especially oranges) is added to the herb, or, alternatively, it is brewed with nearly scalded milk.
- You can also add Chamomile (Egyptian has strong taste), Mint leaves, Star Anise in the Yerba Mate.
- In the summer, try making "tereré" by replacing the hot water with ice-cold water or lemonade. For tereré, it is better to use a small metal cup or mason jar instead of a gourd.
- Mate contains caffeine;^[4] though generally less than tea and coffee.

Warnings

- Remember that you are drinking a hot liquid through a metal straw, the straw will get hot! Take a small sip at first.
- Note that the research conducted is not broad and cannot offer any certain claims about cancer. There is opposing research based on trials that claims the elimination of colon cancer specifically by yerba mate. * The cancer research against yerba mate has not looked into the toxicity of 'alpaca' or 'German Silver', also known as nickel silver. Its toxicity is known to have severe health effects including cancer. Future research may expose that gourd ornaments and 'bombillas' made of this mineral complex are the cause of the cancers.
- Studies suggest that people who drink large amounts of mate per day on a regular basis may have a higher risk of some forms of cancer.

Sources and Citations

1. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yerba_mate
2. ↑ <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/04/24/garden/yerba-mate-ancient-antidote-to-south-america-s-heat.html>
3. ↑ http://www.mymateworld.com/how_to_cure_a_yerba_mate_gourd.htm
4. ↑ http://www.erowid.org/plants/yerba_mate/yerba_mate_chemistry1.shtm
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