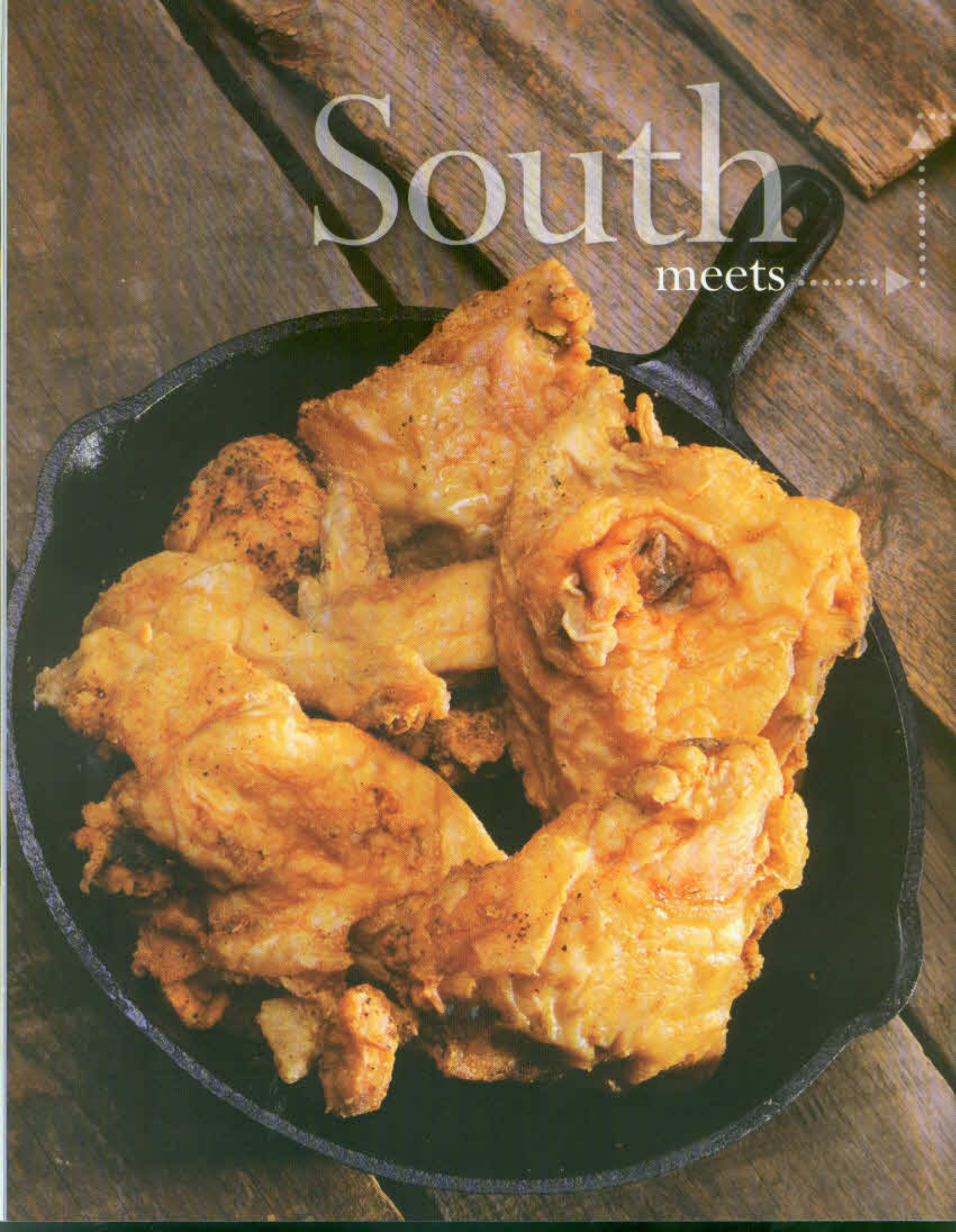


South

meets



▶ East

DITCH THE ICE CUBES AND PAIR SOUTHERN FOOD
WITH HOT TEAS FROM EXOTIC LANDS

In winter, many Charlotteans switch from their summer favorite of sweet iced tea to a less chilly cousin: comforting hot tea.

In recent years, the quality and availability of high-end, loose-leaf tea has risen dramatically, prompting a growing interest in more nuanced, flavorful brews. In fact, many foodies are now treating tea and food pairings as they would wine and food. All it takes is a basic understanding of tea/food pairings to get you started on your own culinary adventure.

While pairing tea and food spans many cultures and eras, the idea of hot tea with Southern cuisine has been overlooked for far too long. Here's the skinny on how to match your favorite foods from Dixie with teas from India, Sri Lanka, China and Japan. Bonus: We'll help you find these great teas right here in Charlotte.



southpark

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Pair This Food:
Country ham with
red-eye gravy



With This Tea:
Assam black
(India)

Why It Works

Bold flavors hold their own in this pairing. Assam's astringent side cuts through the heavy texture of the gravy for a refreshing between-bite brew. Meanwhile, the underlying malt sweetness of the Assam complements ham's savory flavor. As a general rule, black teas pair well with full-flavored foods.



Pair This Food:
Sweet potato
fries



With This Tea:
Sencha green
(The most popular tea
in Japan)

Why It Works

Unexpected combinations of sweet and salty flavors make this pairing sing. Sure, we all love salted, oven-baked sweet potato fries, but the persistently sweet, green-vegetable flavor of Sencha slices through the fat and salt to highlight the abundant sweet potato flavor.

Note: Use water that's well below boiling to brew Sencha and other green teas, and don't brew longer than recommended. If your premium, loose-leaf green tea tastes bitter, it probably wasn't brewed correctly.



Pair This Food:
Grilled pimento
cheese sandwiches



With This Tea:
Darjeeling "second
flush" black
(A summer-picked tea
from India)

Why It Works

Pimento peppers fall on the sweeter, milder end of the pepper flavor spectrum. They're powerful, yet subtly fruity, much like the flavor of a great Darjeeling second flush. Look for a "muscatel" Darjeeling — one with hints of ripe Muscat grapes and stonfruit — for a flavor of fresh-sliced summer fruit and subtle earthiness that sets off the creamy, savory-sweet pimento cheese flavor.



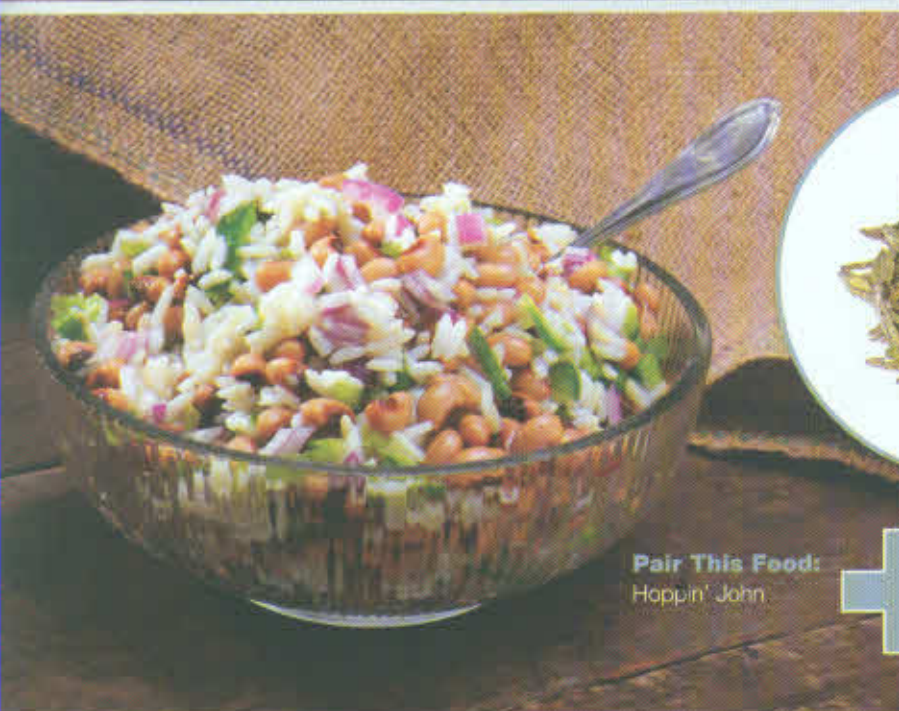
Pair This Food:
Buttermilk fried
chicken



With This Tea:
Ceylon black
(Sri Lanka)

Why It Works

Ceylon teas are often drunk with milk, so buttermilk batter is an easy pairing. Most Ceylons are bold and pungent, so they aren't overpowered by even the greasiest of fried foods, and some Ceylons have lemony notes that brighten the flavor of the chicken itself.



Pair This Food:
Hoppin' John



With This Tea:
Dragonwell
(China)

Why It Works

Dragonwell (also known as "Lung Ching" or "Long Jing") is a very accessible, drinkable tea with a lightly sweet flavor that pairs best with savory foods. Whether you make your Hoppin' John with field peas or black-eyed peas, with or without bacon, it's ideal with Dragonwell – savory, but not so bold or greasy that it overpowers Dragonwell's more delicate notes.



Pair This Food:
Buttery biscuits
and local jam



With This Tea:
English Breakfast
(Often a blend with leaves
from India and China)

Why It Works

Breakfast foods pair well with so-called "breakfast teas" (English, Irish, etc.). However, the pinnacle of all Southern breakfast tea/food pairings is the humble Southern biscuit with basic English Breakfast black tea. Let the butter and jam on the biscuits take over for the milk and sugar in your tea. You may find that you love the taste of tea with nothing added.



Pair This Food:
Ginger spice
Moravian cookies



With This Tea:

Masala chai
(black tea from India with
spices from around the
world and, ideally, local
milk)

Why It Works

Warming spices are perfect for winter and are abundant in both ginger spice. Moravian cookies and in classic Indian chai. This is doubly indulgent, comforting pairing that's sure to wipe away post-holiday blues. Masala chai is also excellent with stonefruits, vanilla desserts, lighter chocolate sweets and many spiced treats.



Pair This Food:
Red velvet cake
with pecans



With This Tea:

Houjicha green
(another "twig tea" from Japan)

Why It Works

There are plenty of "dessert teas" (sweetly flavored teas with names like "Very Vanilla" and "Chocolate Almond"). While many pair well with desserts, there are also many classic, unflavored teas that shine. Roasty, nutty, clean-tasting Houjicha is one of these teas. With red velvet cake it emphasizes the dense creaminess of the icing, cleanses the palate and brings out the richness of the pecans.



Pair This Food:
Krispy Kreme
doughnuts



With This Tea:

Pu-erh
(China)

Why It Works

In China, pu-erh is often consumed after greasy, heavy meals of dim sum. Some say it aids digestion, but all the best pu-erhs are consumed for their deeply nuanced tastes. The dark chocolate and espresso notes of pu-erh are amazing after most heavy Southern meals, but pu-erh also goes well with sweet Krispy Kreme doughnuts, exemplifying the whimsy and fun in cross-cultural, highbrow/lowbrow tea pairings.

