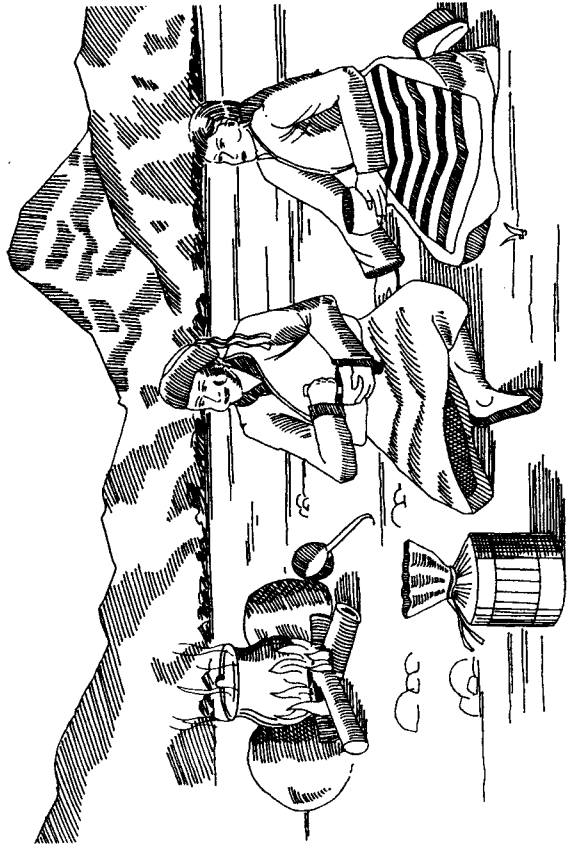


# *Food in Tibetan Life*

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illustrated by the author  
Tibetan script by  
Venerable T G Dhongthong



*A Tibetan man and woman having a picnic meal*

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## Habits, Respect and Humor

Most Tibetans do not smoke, especially women, though some people sniff *nataḡ* (snuff). *Nataḡ* is made from finely ground tobacco, cardamon, cloves, and the fine clean ashes of juniper wood. A person will grind these ingredients for days sometimes. A small mortar and pestle are carried everywhere and grinding them becomes a habit. As a person travels, at any moment of leisure he can pull out the grinder and grind away. After it is well ground, *nataḡ* is sifted carefully into a snuffbox or *naru*. Snuffboxes are sometimes small wooden boxes with tightly fitting lids, but most commonly they are made from a yakhorn. The wide part of the horn is cut straight and hollowed out. A small hole is made in the point, and lids made to cover both ends. Sometimes they also have very fine decorations carved or embossed on them.

When someone wants some *nataḡ*, he simply pulls out the container and unplugs the lid from the pointed end. Then he gently taps some out in a little pile onto his thumbnail. It is sniffed in, the breath is held for a few seconds, and then it is let out through the open mouth. If one sees smoke like dust coming out of the mouth and the person's eyes are filled with tears, it is considered very good *nataḡ*.

A person will never take snuff in front of an altar, temple, monastery, nunnery, or even in front of monks, unless the monks take snuff themselves, which some do. People also smoke pipes. These pipes resemble short walking sticks, and they are popular among the nomads.

To make a greeting, especially to those who are high lamas, incarnate lamas, officials, or even just elders, a person takes off his hat, unties his hair and folds his hands. Then he sticks out his tongue and bows. Showing your thumb means asking for a favour or saying 'Please'. Showing the little finger means something is mediocre or else really bad. When women dust their aprons and spit and clap their hands, they are driving away the bad spirits. They will do this after seeing a bad omen. I was told that when British soldiers led by Colonel Young-husband marched into Tibet in 1903, Tibetan men and women all came out of their homes and applauded the invaders. The British were pleased by this warm welcome, but now you can see the real reason why the Tibetans clapped their hands.

Tibetans believe that the body is always accompanied by five gods associated with the five elements. So taking care of yourself is not just

for personal comfort, it is also pleasing to the gods. For this reason one would never walk or jump over any part of someone else's body. This would be disrespectful to the other person's gods.

Nicknames are very common in Tibet. Many of the given names in Tibetan are very common, and so one is given a nickname according to the way he or she looks or acts. Or sometimes something unusual happens to a person and she or he will get a nickname from that event.

For example, at one time I lived in a monastery and had my head shaved. It seems that the back of my head is flat so everyone at the monastery called me 'Flathead'. Besides the entertainment value, nicknames are useful in large monasteries that have thousands of monks, because so many of them have the same names.

One of our neighbors in the village was named Kusho Dunchen Na, which means 'Honorable Trumpet Nose'. His wife's name was Ribong, which means 'Rabbit'. No one in the village even knew their real names. One elderly fellow was called Yakgo, which means 'Yak-headed'. His head had once gotten badly bumped and then healed imperfectly, so that there were two lumps sticking out of his head like horns. I once asked him how he had gotten hurt. He said he once lived in a monastery and he and a few other monks got into a fight. Since the monks are not allowed to carry weapons, they use rocks or sticks, and sometimes they even use a wooden tea bowl. The edges of these bowls are rather sharp. Two monks hit him with their bowls, and the cut that he got never healed properly.

There was also a person with one eye missing. He was named Ekajati, which is the name of a goddess who has one eye in her forehead. I also knew Agu Ra, which means 'Uncle Goat'. The man with this nickname had a beard sticking out just like a goat's. Then there was Mr Shig Mathar, which means 'Even a Louse Can't Pass Through'. He had a somewhat large nose that was so sharply pointed that not even a tiny insect like a louse could climb up. Finally, there was Mr Kigyak, which means 'Dog Shit'. I have no idea how his story originated.

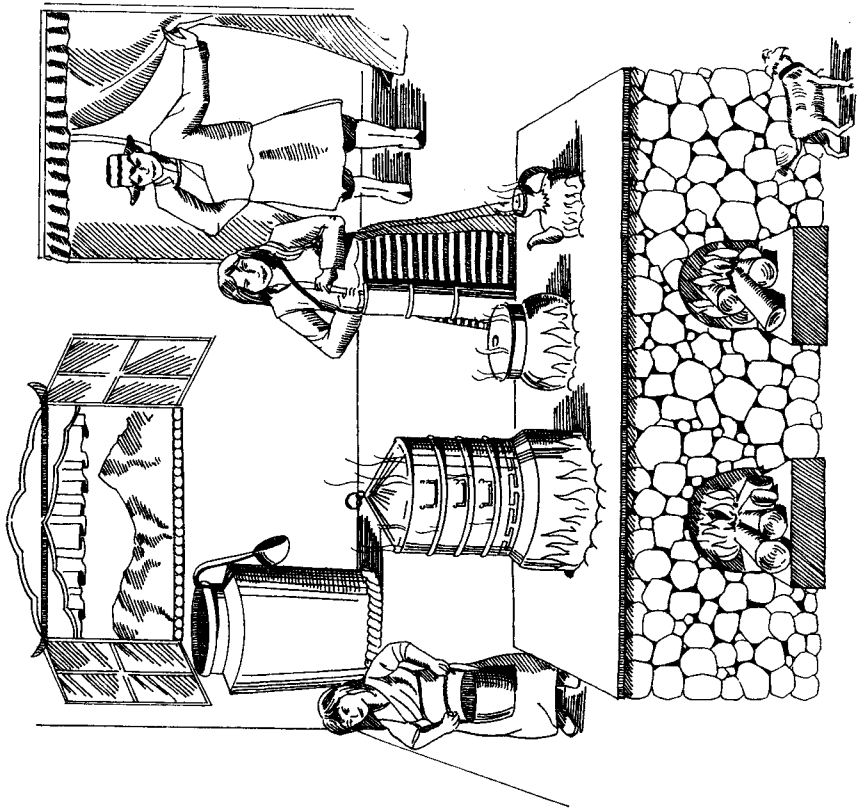
Although people may get nicknames in such rude ways as these, no one seems to take offense. Almost everyone gets a nickname except some high lamas and officials, who are usually treated more formally. Tibetans, though, are just naturally a very humorous people. Almost everyone knows and enjoys telling some good jokes. They like to tell dirty jokes and tease each other so that everyone can laugh and enjoy them.

In an argument the worst thing you can call a person is *nyalu* which means bastard. Another bad name is *kamar* which literally means red-mouth. In Tibet *kamar* means an orphan whose parents have both

died and who has no relatives at all. The name indicates that the person ate up his parents and all his relatives, and so his mouth is still red from their blood.

No matter what part of Tibet you are in, there is always a phrase to swear you are telling the truth. The most common one is *kunchok sum*. This means 'the three precious jewels', or the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Some people swear by calling on the names of their local gods and goddesses. Where I grew up people swore by saying *dzamling kur*. This means 'carry the whole world', or in other words, the person swears if he is not telling the truth he would carry the sins of the whole world.

Most people prefer not to swear as it is not considered a good thing to do. But such words as *kyagpa kampo* or 'dried shit' naturally slip out sometimes, no matter how hard one tries. Traders seem to swear more often than anyone else.



A Tibetan kitchen with a stone stove, as described on the next page

## Homes and Kitchens

The kind of dwelling Tibetans live in depends on whether they are farmers or nomads. Nomads have heavy thick tents made from the hair of the yak. These tents come apart piece by piece so that they can be rolled up and loaded onto yaks, ponies, or dzos. Then when the nomads reach a new place, they can unfold them and set them up. Most of these tents take three large poles, one at each end with one going across between them to form the ceiling ridge. Rope is used to hold the side of the tent out.

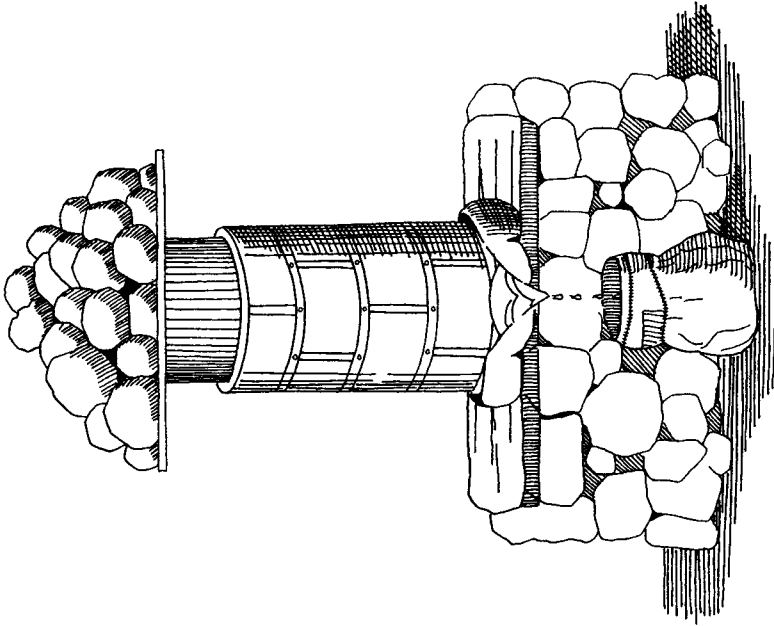
In most tents there is only large room for the whole family. They use a metal tripod for a stove, which is placed in the middle of the room. One corner of the tent always has a little altar, and the opposite corner is usually where the bed for the father and mother goes. If the children are young, their bed is normally right next to that of their parents.

The houses in the villages are usually simple. The kitchen is not a separate room, just one large room that is used for cooking and dining. Foods that are needed every day are stored in small bags and hung around the kitchen. Sometimes a tripod is used for cooking. Wood is used for fuel, although animal dung is used in areas where wood is scarce. Some houses have stoves made of mud and stone. A fire is built in the middle of them for cooking. These stoves do not usually have a separate oven. Breads can be baked on the top or right in the fire-box, by pushing the fire to one side or waiting until there are just warm embers and ashes.

For light at night Tibetans use butter lamps, oil lamps, and *metang*. *Metang* is pine wood that contains a lot of sap. Normally this is the bottom part of the tree, but the thicker parts of the roots are rich in sap and light well once they are split and dried. In farming villages *menag* is also used for light. *Menag* is the exhausted part of mustard seed after the seeds are pressed for oil. The mustard seed is coarsely ground and sprinkled lightly with hot water and mixed into a dough which is stuffed into a sack. This sack goes into a wooden barrel that has a small spigot on the bottom of one side. A flat round stone or wooden board that is smaller in diameter than the barrel is put on the sack to act as a plunger, and more rocks are piled on top to press it down. The whole process is done out in the direct sun. The barrel is left in the sun for several days. As the weight presses down, mustard

oil starts slowly dripping out through the spigot into the container. More and more weight is added. After straining the oil is then stored in little sheepskin bags and wooden jars. It takes at least two or three days before all the oil is pressed, depending on the quantity of the seeds being processed.

The exhausted mustard seed hulls are sometimes fed to livestock. But they can also be made into balls, put on a stick and dried. These balls on the sticks are called *menag*. Once dried, they burn well, and can also be used for light.



*A press for extracting mustard seed oil*

Food is stored in many different ways. Except for what is needed for everyday use, farmers keep their grains in storage rooms. There are usually small separate rooms for each foodstuff. These rooms are dark with very small windows, just big enough to let the air circulate. Poor families who do not have these rooms in their houses dig storage cellars in the ground for their foods and grains. Here they also store grain that will be used later for seeds.

Nomads keep their grain and beans in tightly woven bags and sacks of various sizes. Butter is put into sheepskins or even baby yak skin bags that have been soaked in water. These are stitched up tight, and, as the skin dries, the bags shrink and form a tight seal around the stitches and butter. This way they become waterproof and airtight, and butter can be stored in them for years.

In the farming villages, the butter used for daily consumption is kept in large water tanks. The butter floats on the top, and the evaporation of the water around the butter keeps it cool. This is especially important during the warmer summer months in the farming valleys.

The kinds of pots and utensils people use vary in different parts of the country. In the southern parts of Tibet, there are many metal pots that are brought in by traders from Nepal and India or from Eastern Tibet, where they are made. They are brought in by horse or donkey. Potmakers themselves sometimes bring their wares to sell. There are also local blacksmiths who can make pots and pans, as well as other kinds of containers.

Pots and containers are made out of clay, wood, brass, copper, bronze, or iron. Most of the bowls, teacups, scoops, and spatulas are made from wood. Many kinds of wood are used. The more convoluted and interesting the grain, the more valuable the utensil is thought to be. There is a story about a very special sort of wood that says if a cup is made from this wood, the cup can detect poison. It is called *zabya*, and it is made from a burl that grows out of the side of a particular tree. You have to go out at night to look for it, because it glows in the dark. Cups made from this are naturally very special and highly prized.

Everyone uses fire to cook, and so everyone must be able to start a fire. Among the nomads, each person carries a flint-striker. Whenever a fire is needed, the flint-striker is untied from the belt. There is a small leather wallet attached to the striker which contains a few pieces of flintstone and tinder, or *paawa*. *Paawa* is a cotton-like material gathered from thistles that grow up in the mountains. Once it is dried it catches fire very easily.

To make a fire, the *paawa* is held firmly in the left hand, together with the flintstone. The stone is on top of the *paawa*, so that the sparks fall into it. Then the fire builder grasps the steel striker in his right hand and brings it down sharply against the edge of the stone. One or two strong strokes will throw a good spark into the *paawa*, which will then catch fire. Then the *paawa* is placed in dried leaves. Next one blows on it gently to start the flames up.

In the farming villages each home has a fire that goes continuously. It is very rare for the fire to go out, though sometimes it burns down to just embers and ashes. If it does go out, someone in the family will

go to their neighbors to get fire. Each family also has a flint-striker for use if needed. But the best thing is just to keep the fire going.

There is an old proverb that goes *mengul shi, jengul lang*. It means: 'when one plays with fire, it dies out; when one plays with one's penis, it rises up'. This might be told to a youngster by an older person, but more often, it would be a comment by an adult. However, it is not something that a mother would say in the family circle, as it would not be considered proper to talk like this. But, if a child needed a warning, almost anybody might say it. Roughly it means it is better to play with anything instead of fire.

## Meals and Daily Life

Most people eat three times a day for regular meals, and they also have snacks. The first meal comes early in the morning. It is usually *tsamtuik* or *tsampa* soup, perhaps together with roasted soybeans, pieces of *chura* (dried cheese) and sometimes dried meat and *tsilu* (dried fat). Each person would have at least three bowls of this to eat. Hot buttered tea is served with the soup and each person drinks at least three or four cups of this also.

The biggest meal of the day is served at noon, and dinner is always light. Tea drinking is one of the main habits of the Tibetans. Most people drink tea all day long when they are at home. People are constantly reaching out for the oil-rich, shiny tea cups. This is especially true of the older people. Before drinking the tea, a Tibetan may gather a bit of butter floating on the top of the tea and gently rub it around his nose or behind the ears. This keeps the skin from drying out in the cold weather.

Between meals there is always something to munch on. There is *chura*, dried meat, or *yoe* (toasted or partly popped grain). More frequent meals are served if someone does more physical labor and needs to eat more.

Tibetans have their own ideas about manners and proper behavior just like people everywhere. Chewing with an open mouth is considered bad manners. Stretching out one's legs, loud chatting, spitting out the food once it is in your mouth, or starting to eat before praying are all considered bad manners. As a guest, you would not eat until the person who sits at the head of the row starts the prayers and then eats. This is usually a lama or someone who has taken a religious vow or the oldest layman present.

Once a very respected lama came to visit my father. Special food was prepared for him including some *momo* (see recipe, p 82) which had just been fried in hot oil. I was sitting close to the lama when he was served and he quickly popped a *momo* into his mouth. It must have been terribly hot, because I could hear it sizzling in his mouth. Then his eyes filled with tears, but of course he could not spit it out, because that would have been bad manners. Unfortunately for the lama, as the guest of honor he had also been served very hot buttered tea, and so when he drank this he got no relief. Poor man!

Depending on the region, sometimes a guest should nicely lick off

the plate or bowl he ate from and wipe it out before getting up. If he can he should belch out loud. This is considered a sign of appreciation for the meal. But this custom varies in different parts of the country, and certainly would not be considered good manners everywhere.

When a person is eating and a second person joins him, the first person will not eat until the second one eats. Then he would offer the guest more than he has himself. It is customary in Tibet that when you are first offered food, you sincerely refuse it. Then the host will insist and insist. Finally you accept the food by saying 'Only a very little', even if you are very hungry. This custom is especially common in the central and southern parts of the country.

It is said that when the first representative from Great Britain came to Lhasa he gave a big party for all the Tibetan officials. Trays of food were brought out, but the Tibetans politely refused. Not knowing the local custom the representative then had the food taken away and it was not offered again. After that, it took the representative a long time to make friends and be welcomed in Lhasa society.

## Yearly Customs and Festivals

Tibetans use a lunar calendar. This means that during the 1980s the first month of their year falls somewhere near the end of February or the beginning of March on the Western calendar. Over a period of time the position changes, because there are fewer days in the lunar calendar for every year (360) than in the solar calendar (365).

On the twenty-ninth day of the twelfth month a soup called *gutuk*, a dumpling soup similar to *boetuk* (see recipe, p 80) is served. This is the day before the thirtieth, the last day of the year, and a special celebration is held to get ready for *Losar*, New Year's Day. The celebration is held on the twenty-ninth because the thirtieth, like the fifteenth, is a holy day in Tibet.

The dumplings for *gutuk* include big ones with surprises inside, such as the objects listed below. When the soup is served in bowls, each member of the family gets one dumpling with one of these objects inside, along with other dumplings to be eaten in the normal way. Each member first opens the special large dumpling with the object inside. Whatever one finds indicates that person's personality. For instance, if a person gets:

- salt — good sign, you are all right
- wool — very lazy
- coal — malicious
- chili — rough spoken
- white stone — long life
- sheep pellets — good sign, very clever
- butter — you are very sweet and easy-going

These are the traditional objects put into the dumplings. Nowadays written messages are also included, much like fortune cookies. Everyone reads these out loud and has a good laugh.

*Gutuk* means ninth soup. According to custom everything has to be not less than nine. There must be at least nine ingredients in the soup, and each person must eat at least nine bowls. Everyone will insist on this, and so some clever guests bring their own small bowls along. Everyone saves a little at the end and then dumps this into a large wok. They each cut off a piece of hair, a piece of fingernail, and a piece of old clothing. These are put into the wok too. Then they clean the chimney and put the dirt in the wok. Finally they make an

effigy of a person out of dough and set it in the center of the pile in the wok.

The youngsters take this out late at night and set it in the middle of a trail junction. While doing this they make as much noise as they can by shouting, ringing bells, booming guns, even beating pots and pans. This traditional ceremony is called *lue*. This is done to get rid of all the negative forces at the end of the year and get ready for a new year.

The yearly cycle starts with New Year's Day. In Tibet this is called *Losar* and it is the biggest holiday celebration of the year. Lamas and monks work hard to prepare the monasteries for the ceremony. Outside they whitewash the monastery and dust and clean on the inside. Prayer flags are hung up all around the monastery, and brand new brocades from China are put on the statues of Buddhas and other deities. Most monks also receive a new set of robes from their patrons or family.

The pots and pans are glittering clean. Fine ash soap is used to wash the pots, and some of these big pots and pans have not been washed inside and out like this for a whole year. Even the stone steps leading up to the monastery are rubbed and oiled. Hundreds of butter lamps are lit, and bundles of incense are ready to burn. Whatever flowers one can find are put on the altar, and hundreds of holywater bowls are shined up until they sparkle and filled with fresh water.

Two piles of *kapse* (see recipe, p 68) are placed in front of the altar. *Kapse* is decorated with all sorts of luxury foods such as candies, dried fruits, rock-sugar, and nuts. Outside in the courtyard of the monastery there is a large pile of juniper, rhododendron, and other fragrant branches and flowers ready to light for use as incense during the ceremony.

Among the lay people, everyone is excited about *Losar*. They too clean the house, and sometimes whitewash as well. Everything is cleaned up and made shiny. The children are the most excited of all, as many receive a new set of clothing. Sometimes they also receive sweets such as rock candy, raw sugar (*buram*), or even hardened honey. People start preparations days ahead to be ready for the New Year's celebration.

I remember I always had a hard time falling asleep on the night before *Losar*. I was very anxious to wear my new clothes in the morning and to see everything all brightened up. Even the yaks' and sheep's horns are oiled and shined. The animals wear fancy collars and new bells are put on their necks. The men and women all wash their hair and braid it. They put on their jewelry and their very best clothes.

Early on *Losar* morning, the first day of the first month of the year, even before it gets light enough for anyone to see the lines on their

palms, the adult men and women walk silently to the stream or lake where the villagers normally get their daily water. Along with their large water buckets, they carry bells, and cymbals. They fill up the buckets and carry them on their backs. As they walk home they ring the bells and play cymbals. The sound is like a big herd of animals coming home. When they arrive at the house, the grandmother and grandfather of the house bring out fresh butter in a large bowl, and take a pinch of it, and stick some on, right above the forehead of each member of the family.

Then everyone else gets dressed and goes into the house and sits down in a row. The oldest person in the family sits in the place of honor, at the top of the row of seats, next to the altar. The mother or grandmother of the family brings in the *chemar* (*tsampa* mixed with butter and sugar) and passes it around. Each member of the family takes a pinchful and throws it into the air along with prayers. They do this three times and eat the fourth pinch. This is to symbolize plenty for the grain harvest in the year to come. Next each member of the family is served with a bowl of yoghurt. This symbolizes a plentiful supply of products from the animals in the year to come. Since most Tibetans are either farmers or nomads, these prayers are very important.

Each person next receives a *derka*, a plate of *kapse* along with other treats. Everyone gets exactly the same amount of *derka*, even the unborn baby in its mother's womb is given a *derka*, which is saved.

Then the *cha* (butter tea, see p 53) is served to everyone. The mother and daughter of the house are usually the servers. For this occasion the tea is made as thick as possible and is churned with lots of fresh butter and cream. There are old stories about how the tea is judged to be thick enough and best quality for serving. After the tea is poured into the cup, a coin is set carefully over the tea. If the coin floats without sinking, then the tea is proved to be good.

Before noon every family goes to the monasteries and nunneries and temples and offers *katas* (white greeting scarves), and makes donations to the monks and nuns of food and all kinds of different gifts. A large crowd of villagers get together in the courtyard of the monastery or nunnery where the juniper and other leaves are piled. The abbot of the monastery comes out, and one of the monks starts a fire. As it burns, clouds of sweet smelling smoke will rise into the air. Now the abbot starts chanting and the rest of the monks play religious musical instruments such as drums, conchshells, large oboes, large trumpets, cymbals, and bells. The villagers all circumambulate the pile of burning incense by walking around it in a clockwise circle.

One of the monks comes out with a large plate of *tsampa* (see recipe, p 62) and passes it around to the people. Each person takes a good handful and slowly continues to walk around the pile. The

abbot chants a traditional chant of victory over misfortune. Everyone joins his chanting. As they chant they raise their right hands into the air holding the *tsampa*. They will chant with the abbot three times; at the fourth, with great shouts, everyone throws the *tsampa* into the air. And it comes down like snow on everyone. Then the prayer flags are put up on tall poles, and everyone goes home and puts up their home prayer flags. Some people put them on the roofs, some on the poles in the yard.

In the afternoon, everyone starts drinking the *chang* (see recipe, p 54) that has been fermenting for the last few months. People visit each other, relatives come over. Men start playing with their *mah jong* or *sho* (a dice game) or card games. Tibetans love to gamble especially eastern Tibetans and people from Lhasa. The women dance and sing and drink *chang* too. Children play with other children and show off to each other the new sets of clothes that they have received.

*Losar* lasts for six or seven days. There is a lot of visiting, parties, sharing food and *chang*. The richest food, the kind not usually served, is made for this holiday. Every night there is a big fire out of doors and the boys and girls get together and have song competitions. Every night there is singing and dancing, and *Losar* is a merry time for everyone.

Even beggars who normally just get enough food to last them from day to day can get full and drunk. Once, when I was a small boy, I came across a beggar on the floor. He must have had too much to eat and drink. He told me he would give me some money if I would just roll him over to the other side of the room. I certainly tried, but he was too big for me to roll him over.

## RECIPES



In Tibet, besides tea, Tibetan beer (*chang*) is the most common thing to offer to just about anyone who walks into the house. People used to drink *chang* just for special occasions, but in some parts of the country people drink *chang* more often. In the villages and towns there are no bars, but people go to the house of a family that makes *chang* and other beverages to sell, where there is often a place to sit and drink.

Monks and nuns do not drink alcoholic beverages except some followers of certain religious sects. The whole question of alcohol and Buddhism is interesting, as an examination of it in regard to *arag*, our strongest liquor, shows.

*Arag* is a very special beverage in Tibetan life. Not only does it please people, it even pleases the deities. It is required for certain rituals by monks and nuns. But Buddhist vows do not permit consumption of *arag* (or any alcohol) by the nuns and monks. The legend that explains why goes back to during the reign of Buddha.

Buddha had yet to disallow alcohol consumption at that time. It happened one day that one of the monks who were his followers was out begging for food. He was going from door to door. A beautiful lady, leading a goat in one hand, and carrying a large jar of *arag* in the other, was passing by. She fell in love with the monk at first sight. She approached him and asked: 'You are attractive; can you make love to me?' The monk said: 'No, I am a monk, I am not permitted.' Then the lady said: 'I am on my way to the butcher to kill this goat. Since you happen to be a man with the courage to say no to my request, can you kill this goat for me?' The monk said: 'No, I am not permitted to take lives of any kind.' Then the lady said: 'Since you refused both of my requests, can you drink some of my *arag*?'

The monk thought about it, but he didn't see any restriction imposed by the Buddha, and so he accepted the offer.

He had *arag*, and then more *arag*. Soon he was intoxicated. He then reached out to touch the lady, and made love to her; he killed the goat as well. As soon as the Buddha discovered this, he immediately outlawed the consumption of any alcohol by monks and nuns, and began to warn lay people of its dangers. Although Tibetans recognise the dangers that Buddha spoke of, they still enjoy using alcoholic beverages to liven up parties and other social occasions.

འརྱེ

### BOEJA (Tibetan tea)

In Tibet, tea is made in a churn (see the drawing on p 51). After it is served, we let it sit for a while before drinking it. At least three to five cups of tea are considered necessary for everyone in the morning. And we always say a prayer of offering to the holy ones before drinking. Then we pick up the cup and carefully blow all the butter that is floating on the top of the tea to one side. If you save the butter in this way, it is good when you finish your tea to put some *tsampra* (see p 62) in the cup and mix this with it.

Most tea cups are wooden. A few times a day some one takes a little butter from the cup and lightly rubs it around the outside of the cup. This prevents the wood from cracking when the hot tea is poured in, and it gives a rich oily look. People also take the butter and rub it on their faces and behind their ears, sometimes on their hands. The cold, dry climate is very hard for the skin, and so the butter works as a skin conditioning cream.

1/2 cup loose Darjeeling tea	1/2 cup butter
(or Chinese fermented brick tea)	salt to taste
10 cups hot water	1 cup heavy cream

Put the tea in the hot water and soak for 10 minutes. Then boil the tea (10 to 15 minutes for Chinese tea, 3 to 4 minutes for Darjeeling tea). Strain the tea from the pot and pour it into a churn or blender. Add the butter, salt, and cream and mix for about 3 minutes. You can mix half a quantity at a time if the blender is small. Then serve in cups.

To make tea more simply, just add salt and a lump of butter to each cup. Then pour the hot tea into this cup. This is a common way for travelers to prepare tea in Tibet.

## ཇམ་ཇམ་

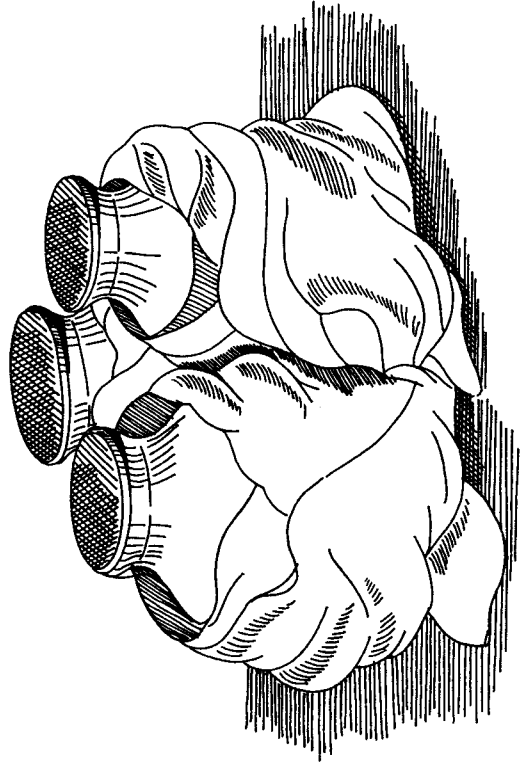
### CHANG (Tibetan beer)

*Chang* can be made from rice, wheat, corn, oats, millet and barley. If corn is used, it should be toasted and roughly ground. Some people do this for wheat, barley and oats, but it is really not necessary. These grains can be cooked whole without toasting. Although barley is most commonly used for *chang* in Tibet, rice is the quickest to ferment so we will take rice as an example.

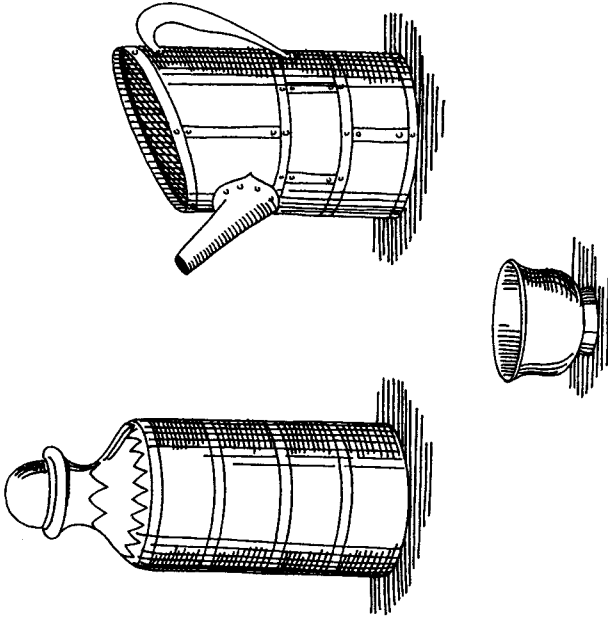
7 cups white rice  
water as needed  
2 tbsp brewer's yeast  
(or *yap*, p 97)  
2 tbsp sugar

Boil the rice in about 14 cups of water, just like you would for eating. Spread the cooked rice on a clean surface and let it sit until it feels cool (about 85°F: 29°C). Grind the yeast and sugar together, make it powdery. Sprinkle this yeast over the rice evenly and mix it well.

Put the rice in a barrel or in a clay jar or large glass jar, big enough to hold it all. Cover and wrap to keep it warm. We use blankets to do this, as shown in the drawing. Set the container in a warmer part of your house. Now leave it for at least 48 hours. If the cooked rice and yeast does not ferment in three days, warm the rice a bit. In Tibet we heat a rock shaped like a round ball. We make a well in the rice and put the heated rock in. Then the jar is covered and wrapped up again.



Boiled rice in pots is kept warm with blankets to help it ferment



Typical vessels for serving and drinking chang

You will know by the smell when the rice is fermented. Tibetans call this *lum*, and sometimes people just take the *lum* and fry it in a little oil. Sugar is added and it is eaten as a treat.

To make *chang*, put the *lum* in a bigger jar or leave it in the same one if it will hold 15 cups of water on top and has a tight cover. Add 15 cups of cold water. Stir this and put the cover on. Make it airtight. Now set it in a cool place for ageing. *Chang* made with rice should age at least 2 weeks before drinking, but it is better to leave it longer. Other grains must be left for longer. Some could age at least 3 to 6 months. In Tibet the jar is sealed with mud and sometimes with yak-dung or beeswax. In the UK or USA a refrigerator can be used.

Strain off the *chang* (liquor) and serve it. Put the *lum* back into the container. Then add less water and age for a longer time than you did at first. You can add water and drain off the *chang* up to three times. But after that it will not be good any more. In Tibet the exhausted *lum* is fed to livestock.

In Tibet, we serve *chang* from containers of the kinds shown in the drawing, pouring it into cups or glasses.

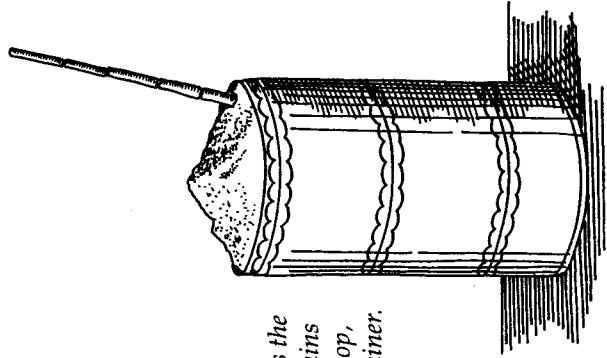
You can drink *chang* cold or you can warm it up. If you warm it, add a little sugar, then drink it.

NOTE. For barley *chang*, use brewer's barley.

རོང་པ་ (ཤིང་ཇང་)

**DONGPA (SHING CHANG)** (Tibetan hot toddy)

In Tibet we have a specially made container of wood for drinking *dongpa*. It is called *dongpa* when empty and *shing chang* when full, and it looks like a little barrel. The hollow tube is made from cane or bamboo and the holes at the bottom are made in the side of the tube instead of in the end. The holes are covered with a wrapping of thread so only the liquid comes through, and not the grains.



*The drawing shows the hot toddy, with grains foaming up at the top, in its Tibetan container.*

*Dongpa* is always made from millet, very seldom from wheat or oats.

6 cups millet

4 tsp brewer's yeast or *pap* (see p 97)

3 tsp sugar

Cook the millet just like rice — boil in about 12 cups of water until water is absorbed — and spread it over a clean surface. Let it sit until it is cool to the touch, but not cold. Sprinkle the yeast over the millet and gently mix it well. Put the mixture into a barrel or large jar that has a cover. Cover it and wrap in blankets. Let it ferment in a warmer part of your house. The temperature should be around 70° to 80°F (21°-26°C). It will take 4 to 5 days before it ferments sufficiently. Then open

it and sprinkle a little cold water on the fermented millet, just enough to make it moist. Put all the grain and the liquid into a container and make it airtight. Set it in a cool place to age. (In Tibet we put it in a basement or unheated room for several months. In the UK or USA it can be left in the refrigerator). It must age at least 2-3 weeks.

Fill a large glass to about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with mash (fermented grain and liquid). Pour boiling water over it, stir, and allow it to sit for a few minutes. Then serve. It should be drunk through a narrow hollow tube like bamboo or a straw, so that you only take the liquid and not the kernels of millet in the bottom. Keep adding hot water as you drink until the flavor is weak.

## ཅུ་མཚོ་

## TSAMPA (Tibetan toasted flour)

*Tsampa* is the main staple of Tibet. It is usually made from barley, but it can also be made from wheat, corn, millet, oats, even soybeans. *Tsampa* just means flour made from toasted grain. Of course the most common *tsampa* in Tibet is made from barley, and that is what people think of when they hear the word *tsampa*.

4 lb toasted barley or *yoe* (you can use any of the grains mentioned in the *yoe* recipe on the preceding page)

Grind the toasted grain in a flour mill\* until it is as fine as flour. Now it is *tsampa*. *Tsampa* can be eaten in many different ways. You can just add cold water, stir it up and drink; or you can add tea to *tsampa* and drink it. You can also just pick up a handful and chew it up. It is also used for cooking and many other things.

The preparation of *tsampa* is usually the same all over Tibet. Sometimes people will heat up fine sand in a large, heavy pan. Then the grain is poured into the heated sand and stirred. This way it toasts evenly and does not burn. There is a special little broom made for stirring *yoe* as it toasts. After toasting, the sand and grain are poured into a sifter and the sand is strained out.

\* In Tibet, each house usually has a quern, a stone mill, for grinding that is turned by hand. But large amounts of *yoe* (grain) are taken to the miller. Almost every large village has a mill. The heavy stone millstones are turned by a waterwheel like the one used as shown on p 27. The water is carried from a nearby stream by a chute and rushes down over the waterwheel to make it turn.

## ཅུ་མཚོ་

## TSAMTUK (Tsampa soup)

2 cups *tsampa*\* (see p 62) serves 3-4  
 7 cups water  
 1/2 stick (2 oz/60g) butter  
 or margarine  
 salt to taste

Add the *tsampa* to the water while cold and stir well. Bring to a boil. Add the butter and the toasted soybeans. (If the soybeans are still raw, you can toast them by spreading them in a single layer in the bottom of a dry frying pan and stirring or shaking the pan continuously over medium heat, until the kernels split). Simmer for 5 minutes. Add salt to taste. Now you can add the cheese and serve in bowls. (if you are using *chura*, you should add it with the soybeans, not right before serving.)

\* Instead of *tsampa* you can substitute cornmeal.

## ཀྲིམོམོ་

### TRIMOMO (Steamed bread)

- serves 2-3
- 2 cups whole wheat flour
  - 2 cups white flour
  - lukewarm water as needed
  - 1 tsp baking yeast
  - 1 tsp baking soda
  - 1 cup oil
  - 2 tsp turmeric

Add yeast and baking soda to 1 cup of lukewarm water. Stir until all the yeast is dissolved. Combine the two flours. Add 1 cup of the mixed flour to the water. Stir it well. Let it sit 2—3 hours in a warm place. Add the rest of the flour and knead a dough. Add water if necessary. The dough should be stiff but not too stiff. Break the dough into two halves. Roll it out until it is about 1/8 inch thin. Mix the oil and turmeric together. Apply a thin, even coat of this to the surface of the dough (as shown in fig.1).

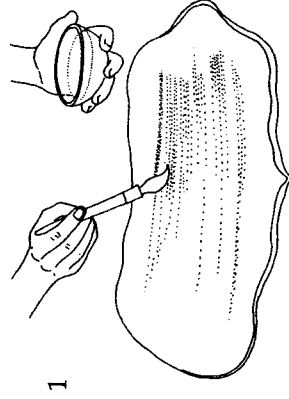
Roll the flattened dough into a log (fig. 2). It will be about 3 inches in diameter. Slice the log up into 2 inch pieces (fig.3), and shape each of these in turn into a *trimomo*. The way you do it is to take each section and hold it upright with your thumbs in front and fingers behind, then squeeze with your thumbs until the middle part becomes much thinner (fig. 4). As you do this, the thicker top and bottom will bend round your thumbs, towards you, and will eventually meet.

The next step is to put the piece of dough down on a flat surface, thick part underneath and thin part uppermost. Then insert your forefingers into it, one from each side. Keeping them in this position, grasp the dough between your thumbs (in front) and second fingers (behind), then twist the whole thing (fig. 5) by turning your right hand 90° away from you and your left hand 90° towards you. This will make the ends open into a flower shape and bring the sides together at the bottom (fig. 6). Round this bottom part and flatten it so that the *trimomo* can sit in the steamer.

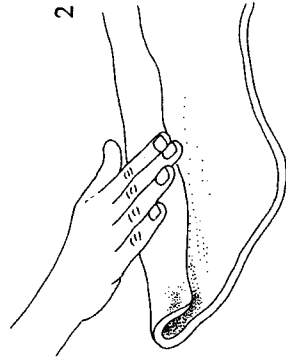
**ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF SHAPING.** You can also just pull the dough off in chunks and roll each chunk into a ball about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Flatten the bottom and sides, leaving the top rounded. Cut a cross on the top with a knife (just a slight cut, not all the way).

Apply a thin coat of butter or margarine to the steamer. Put the *trimomo* in it, in rows, with a little space between them so that they do not touch each other. Steam for 15 to 20 minutes over a high heat.

The *trimomo*, which look like flowers if made the first way, are usually eaten with curry or some other sauces.



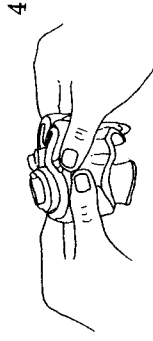
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6

## མོ་མོ་

MOMO (Steamed meat-filled dumplings)

serves 4-5

*Momo* (the same word is used for both the singular and plural) are a very special treat in Tibet. Their importance in the eyes of Tibetans has even made them the subject of a proverb. If someone is a scold or talks too much, Tibetans say: KHA MOMO NANGSHIN DHE (last word pronounced 'day') 'Keep your mouth like a momo (i.e. closed)'. At a formal meal or a celebration, one of the dishes will be *momo*. People fold them up in different shapes to fit the occasions; some are simple like the ones in this recipe and some are very fancy. Some are made with a tiny hole left in the top so the juice can be sucked out before the *momo* is eaten.

Tibetans learn how to make *momo* from the time they are very young. In Tibet a cook starts out to make *momo* for many people with a big pile of dough on one side and a big pile of meat filling on the other. A good cook uses the last bit of dough for the last bit of filling and has nothing left over.

Any flat steamer such as a Japanese steamer can be used to make *momo*. If nothing is available, you can even bake them in an oven or boil them.

The sort of steamer which Tibetans use for making *momo*, and for steaming other things too, is shown in the drawing.

- 2 lb lean ground beef or lamb
- 1/3 cup hot water
- 1 cup finely chopped celery
- 1/2 cup finely chopped green onion
- salt to taste
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp grated nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp freshly ground ginger

and for the dough

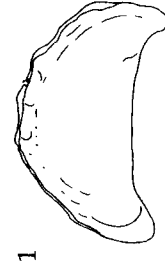
- 3 cups white flour
- 3 cups well sifted whole wheat flour
- water as needed
- 1 tsp baking soda

Add hot water, celery, onion, salt and all the spices to the ground meat. Mix well and set aside.

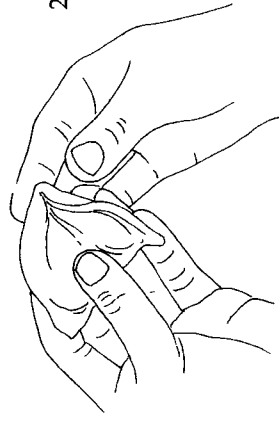
Combine the flours with the baking soda. Add water and mix well to make a stiff dough. Pull off a small chunk of dough, about an inch or ping pong ball size and roll it into a ball. Flatten it slightly with your hands and dust both sides with flour. Roll over the flattened ball once with a rolling pin. Then roll the dough flat using the roller from the edge of the dough into the middle. Push the roller over the dough with your right hand and turn the dough a little with your left hand after each roll. When you have rolled all around the dough you will have a flat circle about 4 inches across that is just a little thicker in the middle — just as it should be to hold the stuffing.

You can alternatively roll a larger quantity of dough out with a rolling pin and cut small circles with a cookie cutter; in that case, you will have to pinch the edges of each circle thinner by hand.

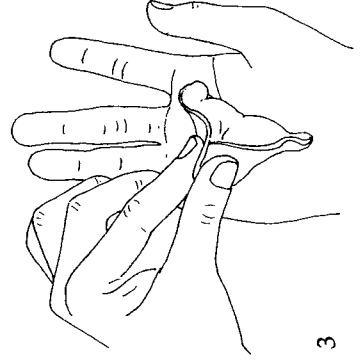
The easiest way to stuff a *momo* is this. Put a teaspoon of the meat mixture on your dough circle. Fold the circle in half. Now you will have a flat half-moon shape (see fig. 1). Pinch the edges together. Really pinch, do not be gentle here because you have to seal the edges together so the juices do not leak out while steaming. Bend the *momo* along the straight side (fig. 2) and pinch once more on the edge right above the bend to reseal it at the bend. The *momo* will now have assumed the shape shown in fig. 3 and can sit up in the steamer (fig. 4). Continue to make *momo* until you use up all the dough and filling.



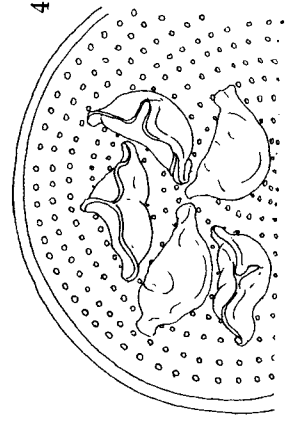
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