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Unidad 8, Almanaque

La Yerba mate en el Cono Sur

How to prepare and drink mate (the Uruguayan way)

00:15

Okay, so this is what you need to prepare your mate. The mate; the bombilla, the metal straw, the yerba , which we have put this container with a narrow spout which makes it easier to pour later; a thermos filled with water which is basically near boiling, shouldn’t be too hot that you burn yourself. But you can boil the water then add half a cup of cold water or just have it right before boiling; and a half a glass of lukewarm water.

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Okay, so to start preparing the mate, you need to pour the yerba into the mate, around two-thirds full.

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The most important thing is the position of the yerba inside the mate; it should be at a slant so fix it so that there’s a hole where the water will go. So it’s slanted and you will pour the lukewarm water into the hole, making sure that you don’t flood the whole thing. So there should be a part of yerba that is dry. Now you’re gonna wait until the water is completely absorbed before you insert the bombilla. So you have. To wait a little bit, around a minute or so and then you will insert the bombilla. You will insert the bombilla on the side of the hole, just on the side, very carefully, making sure you don’t upset the whole slant if possible. And now the mate is ready to go.

02:38

Now we’re ready to drink the mate. So we’re going to pour the water from the thermos, always into the hole, again making sure we don’t flood the whole thing. And we leave— part of the yerba is dry. Be careful, it might be too hot, so you want to careful at the beginning and just add more cold water to the thermos if its too hot. You sip until you hear that sound. Go again. So that signals that the water is softly gone and you need to add more water. Try not to move the bombilla too much; you might use it to adjust a little bit the hole but don’t move it too much. Now you can add water again, always on the same side, making sure the other side is always kept dry as possible. It will make the flavor last longer. So, although you can drink the mate on your own, usually this is a social activity, so you share the mate with someone else. If you do that and you drink with someone else, there’s always one person that is in charge of pouring the water. Pouring the water is called cebar, so. the person in this case, Marinella, is the cebadora, so it will always be her pouring the water into the mate. And she handed it to me so I’m going to drink it. So when you drink it again, try not to move the bombilla too much so that you disturb the arrangement of the yerba. When I’m done, I pass it back to her, and she will—she may, accommodate the yerba, make the hole again and then pour the water and pass it to the next person.

05:08

So usually the mate is passed around back forth from the cebadora to the other people drinking several times. If someone in the group doesn’t want to drink another one, when that person is done, they pass it back and say thanks, *gracias*, and that means that’s it for that person. So the cebadora will not pass it back to that person and will pass it to the rest of the group.

05:52

As you can see, after having run a bit, even the yerba on the top has become a little bit moist although you never pour water directly on that side. So when you’ve drank approximately ¾ of the thermos of water, the mate will start losing its flavor. But you can turn it around to continue to drinking. So what you do is you remove the bombilla from that side and move it to the opposite side, 180 degrees from where it was originally. So you kind of like form again the hole on the opposite side with the bombilla and insert it there and you can start pouring water on that side. If you need, you might want to boil more water if you’re done with that thermos and you can continue drinking the mate. Of course, that side, the flavor won’t last as long as the first side but it will give you more flavor for a bit.

7:14

That’s it. Enjoy your mate.

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