

"I'm trying to produce the very best ice cream and as I get bigger and bigger and I get more and more orders, I need it to get to the locations around Canberra in the very best state, and I

walnut paste. "See that? That's pure walnuts and it's refined down to the point where it's released all the oil. A lot of people try to use food processors for this but you get a very different

laksa).

While things get bigger, the one thing that hasn't changed is Marshall's love of experimentation. There's no ice cream (almost) that Marshall will

basement bathroom (the shower is the "chocolate room") and an odd assortment peers out: invert sugar, pectin powder, baking powder, gelatine, glycerine, hazelnut meal, isomalt,

door, but we don't see it as an intrusion. It's just gorgeous."

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Anthea Cahill's Real Chai

Anthea Cahill is Canberra's chai-maker, and is always being asked to make chai – at friends' houses, or weddings – but she doesn't think of it as a big ask.

She makes her French dark chocolate Real Chai with a liberal dose of assam tea, a mix of cinnamon bark, ginger, cardamom and cloves, a dark, sexy hint of chocolate, and a dash of love.

And yes, she lists love as an ingredient on the the pretty tins of the spiced, traditional Indian tea. She admits this somewhat sheepishly but with the faintest touch of defiance.

With her long brown curly hair, wide eyes, expressive gestures and dreamy way of talking (she doesn't quite say "groovy" when describing her tea), she looks like she could be a flower child in Haight-Ashbury during the Summer of Love, only one who didn't drop out.

Cahill is a lot like her tea: warm and welcoming. Her limited-edition Christmas chai made with white chocolate, cranberries and nutmeg, is decorated with red baubles and what I think, mistakenly, is a sprig of mistletoe. It's just her everyday logo, she points out gently. "But it could be mistletoe," she adds generously.

Cahill may be one of the loveliest

people you'll ever meet, but she has also proved she has a cool head for business. She has been building a tiny chai empire in Canberra since late 2008 and is ready to expand into the Sydney market (Melbourne next).

Last month she was in Sydney "spreading the chai love" and her exotic teas are now stocked in some top food stores: the Essential Ingredient Sydney in Rozelle, the Gourmet Grocer in Balmain, Blackwater Deli in Pyrmont and Avenue Road Deli in Mosman.

Two of her eight part-time staff members are moving to Sydney and will sell her chai at Fox Studios and Eveleigh markets.

Cahill felt the time to expand was right. "We wanted to get it right in one place first, which I think we've done," she says.

In a previous life, Cahill was a public service website designer. But she discovered chai seven years ago in a Czech Republic tea house while she was there as a peace volunteer ("IT to chai tea!" she says gleefully).

She fell deeper in love with chai while in London, where it was staple fare in elegant teahouses. On her return to Australia, she started blending her own chai out of frustration at the insipid, cloying taste of artificially



Anthea Cahill in the kitchen of her home, making chai.

Photo: Karleen Williams

flavoured syrups, powders and tea bags used to make "instant chai" in cafes. She uses assam tea as the base, and says you need to choose high-quality black tea that's low in caffeine and tannins.

When Cahill tells me people sometimes ask her if she would ever make an instant powder chai, she looks visibly upset. Then she shakes it off.

"I tell them, 'No it doesn't fit with my values of real chai,'" she says patiently but firmly, as if she is talking to a naughty three-year-old. "It's

good to know what you stand for and why you're doing what you do."

Part of her role, she feels, has been educating Canberrans about what real chai is, which is how she came up with the name when she started at the local markets. She's also started a caffeine-free chai, replacing the black tea with organic roasted dandelion root and chicory. The result is creamy and robust, she says.

"I find it very smooth and comforting and I am actually loving it better

than the original, because I can have lots of it," she says, her eyes lighting up. Cahill involved the community in creating her caffeine-free blend. She gave samples to 40 chai lovers who had been pestering her for a caffeine-free alternative.

And so far, Cahill still loves chai herself.

"When I started I remember thinking, 'Oh God, I hope I don't get sick of chai', and I never have," she laughs.

Sarina Talip