

Portland monthly



CHAI TEA

Spella Caffé

SW Ninth Ave & Alder St

503-421-9723

www.spellacaffe.com

Ordering a chai at this little food cart takes time. But according to owner Andrea Spella, there's no other way. And if you've been put off by bad chain-store coffee-shop versions, rest assured—Spella has given new life to this ancient hot (or cold) drink. Here's how he does it: First, he combines turbinado sugar or honey with three heaping teaspoons of dry, pan-roasted spices like cardamom, cloves, star anise, black pepper, and loose-leaf Assam tea (from local company Jasmine Pearl Tea Merchants) in equal parts water and milk. Next, he uses an old piston-style espresso machine to steam the brew. Then it sits—for three whole minutes. Only then will Spella pour the beverage through a sifter and into your lucky cup, using a “pour, swirl, pour, swirl” motion. At which point you'll knock back this utterly perfect drink in no time flat.

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BEST OF THE CITY '08

AUGUST 2008

\$4.99 www.portlandmonthlymag.com