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Ready for Monday?

The Forgotten Drink That Caffeinated North America for Centuries

Senate backs big land transfer for Nevada military complex

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Australian solar-powered electric car built by university students has competed

Inside the Nisga'a Nation's Fight to Get a 36-Foot Totem Pole Back from Scotland

Michigan State researchers have helped make cosmic history w/ rare discovery

DINAP News

Baby Buried With Care 10,000 Years Ago Found in Italian Cave

Indigenous Activists Ceiticize "Avatar" Sequel

Water authority lays out Colorado River plan to protect Lake Mead, Lake Powell

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Northern Plains tribes bring back their wild 'relatives'

Reminder: Nominations for NEJAC Membership are Now Open until March 17, 2023

Climate change is forcing Native Alaskans to move from their ancestral homes

Salmon People: A tribal fishing family's fight to preserve a way of life

EIS reports Goldendale, Washington, energy project would harm tribal resource



We're ready for Monday....are you?

The Forgotten Drink That Caffeinated North America for Centuries Yaupon tea, a botanical cousin to yerba maté, is now almost unknown.

[Atlas Obscura](#)

- *Ben Richmond*



At a council, the chief sits at the place of honor surrounded by his advisors. Cassina is prepared by women in the foreground. Image from the University of South Florida Libraries Special Collections / Public Domain.

Every morning, every day, 85 percent of Americans alter their state of consciousness with a potent psychoactive drug: caffeine. Their most common source is the roasted seeds of several species of African shrubs in the genus *Coffea* (coffee), while other Americans use the dried leaves of a species of *Camellia* plant from China (tea).

Americans love caffeine, but few realize just how ancient the North American craving for caffeine truly is. North Americans have been enthusiastically quaffing caffeinated beverages since before the Boston Tea Party, before the English founded Jamestown, and before Columbus landed in the Americas. That is to say: North Americans discovered caffeine long before Europeans “discovered” North America.

Cassina, or black drink, the caffeinated beverage of choice for indigenous North Americans, was brewed from a species of holly native to coastal areas from the Tidewater region of Virginia to

the Gulf Coast of Texas. It was a valuable pre-Columbian commodity and widely traded. [Recent analyses](#) of residue left in shell cups from Cahokia, the monumental pre-Columbian city just outside modern-day St. Louis and far outside of cassina's native range, indicate that it was being drunk there. The Spanish, French, and English all documented American Indians drinking cassina throughout the American South, and some early colonists drank it on a daily basis. They even exported it to Europe.

As tea made from a species of caffeinated holly, cassina may sound unusual. But it has a familiar botanical cousin in yerba maté, a caffeine-bearing holly species from South America whose traditional use, preparation, and flavor is similar. The primary difference between cassina and maté is that while maté weathered the storm of European conquest, cassina has fallen into obscurity.



Sipping on Cassina at the Department of Agriculture. Photo from the Library of Congress / LC-DIG-hec-32428.

Today it's better known as yaupon, and it's mostly planted as an ornamental throughout the southeastern United States. Recent years have seen a handful of small-scale growers selling and promoting cassina for consumption, typically under the name yaupon tea. Cafes in a few scattered Southern locales are selling it and pushing for a revival.

This is not the first call for a reappraisal. For over a century, botanists, historians, and even the U.S. Department of Agriculture have periodically drawn attention to the absurdity of cassina's disuse in its native land.

So why was a plant of such well documented potential, which seemingly should have developed into a domestic alternative to expensive tea and coffee imports, ignored for so long? What happened to cassina?

Over the years, cassina has gone by many names. But just one gave the tea a permanent black eye that diminished its commercial prospects for centuries.

The first Spanish colonists in Florida who, according to [one contemporary account](#), drank cassina "every day in the morning or evening," knew it as *té del indio* or "cacina." The English in North

Carolina called it *yaupon*, a term borrowed from the Catawba language that is still the most common name for the plant itself. In South Carolina, “cassina” was the usual appellation, possibly derived from the long extinct Timucuan language. And colonists throughout the English-speaking colonies often settled simply for “black drink.”

Upon export to Europe, cassina was marketed in England under the names “Carolina tea” and “South Sea tea,” and in France as “appalachina,” likely a reference to the Appalachee people. This confusing array of names emphasizes the practicality of the Linnaean classification system, which was still in its infancy when Europeans learned of cassina. William Aiton, an eminent British botanist and horticulturist, director of Kew Gardens, and “Gardener to His Majesty,” is credited with giving cassina the scientific name it bears to this day: *Ilex vomitoria*. *Ilex* is the genus commonly known as holly. *Vomitoria* roughly translates to “makes you vomit.”

Cassina does not make you vomit. Both modern scientific analysis and centuries of regular use by Southerners confirms this. But several early European accounts of cassina mention vomiting. Cassina seems to have been used in elaborate purification rituals where men sat in a circle, sung or chanted, and took turns chugging and then throwing up hot cassina.

Yet other detailed, first-hand accounts of indigenous people drinking cassina don’t mention vomiting at all. Anthropologist Charles M. Hudson and others have [suggested that a plant with emetic properties](#) may have been added to the cassina brew (unbeknownst to European observers) or that the black drink ceremony may not have involved cassina at all. Alternatively, if the ritual vomiting did, in fact, involve only cassina, the sheer volume of liquid consumed could explain the vomiting. So could the fact that vomiting was a common ritual practice for Southeastern indigenous people—participants may have trained themselves to throw up at will.

Nevertheless, the association of cassina with vomiting persists: Sources such as the Oxford English Dictionary erroneously describe yaupon leaves as having emetic or purgative properties, keeping alive the myth that cassina makes you throw up.



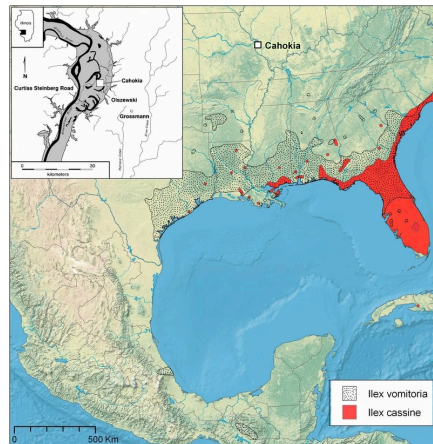
Ilex vomitoria Aiton of the family Aquifoliaceae. Photo from the Public Domain.

William Aiton may have simply made a long-perpetuated mistake when he named cassina “*Ilex vomitoria*.” But there’s reason to believe he and other Europeans conspired against the plant.

As the royal gardener, Aiton knew some of the richest and most powerful people in the British Empire. One of the most profitable and influential forces in that empire was the East India Company, which held a virtual monopoly on the tea trade. Its officers may well have worried that cassina represented a potential replacement for a lucrative British commodity, especially as it grew abundantly within regions then under the control of Spain and France.

In his entry on *Ilex vomitoria*, Aiton listed “South-Sea Tea” as a common name for cassina, suggesting he was aware of its use as a beverage amongst the English. Further, Aiton chose the name vomitoria even though Carl Linnaeus, the founder of the modern taxonomic system, referenced cassina under the name *Ilex Cassine vera Floridanorum* in 1753. (*Ilex cassine* is now the name for a close relative of cassina, the dahoon holly, which has significantly less caffeine.)

If Aiton’s sensational name choice was simply a mistake, it could have been corrected in the subsequent edition of his book *Hortus kewensis*, which was published by his son in 1810. It’s hard to imagine both Aitons missing *Bartram’s Travels* (the first English edition was published in the early 1790s) wherein Philadelphia botanist William Bartram describes southeastern American Indians and European traders drinking cassina and makes no mention of them throwing up. There’s no smoking gun, but given that the British Empire passed laws and went to war to maintain monopolies on goods such as sugar, tobacco, and opium, it’s possible Aiton engaged in scientific slander.



Map showing distribution of *Ilex vomitoria* and *Ilex cassine*. Studies have found cassina remnants in the ruins of Cahokia. Credit: Ron L. Stauber, draftsman, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America.

Either way, cassina never developed into a major English export or drink of choice. [Recent research](#) at the University of Florida suggests that the scientific name continues to make people “leery of buying” cassina despite preferring it over maté in a blind taste test. In the words of Charles M. Hudson, our insistence on associating cassina with vomiting [may be because](#) “we are all too ready to emphasize the bizarre and exotic in the cultural practices of the Indians.”

That’s not to say that cassina was never drunk widely after the colonization of the Americas. In the earliest days of the Southern colonies — when plantations were being carved out of woodland and luxury imports were rare — cassina drinking was widespread from slaves to plantation

owners. But as plantations became larger and more profitable, the nouveau riche demonstrated their wealth by drinking expensive imported tea.

“Cassina was so abundant on the coast,” writes Hudson in *Black Drink: A Native American Tea*, “that it could be drunk by the poor; hence it became déclassé.” An 1883 encyclopedia entry on cassina summed up this new state of affairs when it [stated that](#) cassina is “still used as a beverage by the poorer classes in North Carolina.”

The Civil War reinforced this association of cassina with a hardscrabble lifestyle. When the South seceded, luxury imports became scarce, and both rich and poor turned to cassina. After the war, when coffee and tea became available again, cassina had acquired more negative associations: war, hunger, and defeat.

In the modern South, cassina, usually known by the name yaupon, is just a plant: a border shrub or small tree in residential developments. (Americans regularly walk by the caffeine-producing plant on their way into coffee shops that source beans from the other side of the globe.) Whether or not the ongoing cassina revival can reverse its ignominy and poor reputation remains to be seen.

The extent to which coffee and tea are now being marketed as ethical, fair, and environmentally friendly, as well as the surging popularity of cassina’s cousin, yerba maté, would seem to indicate that cassina’s time has come. And yet, as the many calls for cassina’s rediscovery over the past century show, cassina has long been predicted as the next big thing. For it to succeed commercially, a change to its botanical name may be necessary: Like an acquitted suspect, no matter how many times cassina is proven innocent, an air of suspicion and nausea lingers from the original accusation.

Novelty, which has replaced necessity as the driving force behind cassina consumption, can only take cassina so far. So what’s hopeful about the recent cassina revival is that it’s centered around cities such as Austin, Texas, and Asheville, North Carolina, which boast strong local food movements. The cities’ growers and cafe owners are touting the unique, richly herbaceous, complex flavor of cassina. It’s also recently become available for purchase by the bag and appeared in bottles in specialty food stores.

Because while explaining cassina calls for a trip into contentious history and unsettling nomenclature, taking a first sip of yaupon is revelatory: North America’s rightful caffeinated drink simply tastes wonderful.

How was it? Save stories you love and never lose them. This post originally appeared on Atlas Obscura and was published March 28, 2018.

[Senate backs big land transfer for Nevada military complex](#)

The U.S. Senate has voted for a massive expansion of a northern Nevada naval air training complex that will transfer of a huge swath of public land to the military.

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kolotv.com

[Mystery Nevada fossil site could be ancient maternity ward](#)
[Scientists have uncovered new clues about a curious fossil site in Nevada, a graveyard for dozens of giant marine reptiles](#)

[Drive.com.au](#)

[An experimental solar-powered electric car built by university students has completed 1000km on a single battery charge, setting a new world record.](#)



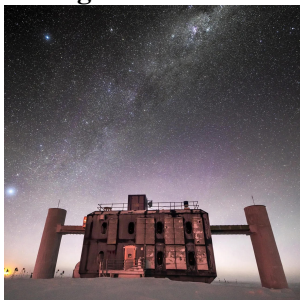
<http://drivesoci.al/SrKY50M7J3Bdrive.com.au>

[Australian solar-powered electric car drives 1000km on one charge](#)
[Australian solar car claims a new world record averaging 85km/h for 1000km.](#)

Inside the Nisga'a Nation's Fight to Get a 36-Foot Totem Pole Back From Scotland
National Museums Scotland agreed to repatriate the object, which was stolen in 1929, following an in-person appeal by an Indigenous delegation

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/inside-the-nisgaa-nations-fight-for-the-return-of-a-36-foot-totem-pole-180981342/?utm_source=smithsonianmag&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20221222-daily-responsive&spMailingID=47793660&spUserID=OTYyNTc5MzkyMTQyS0&spJobID=2362605046&spReportId=Mjm2MjYwNTA0NgS2

Michigan State researchers have helped make cosmic history with a rare discovery in Antarctica.



msutoday.msu.edu

[Cosmic discovery](#)

[For just the second time in human history, researchers have identified a source of high-energy neutrinos](#)

DINAP Director Position Open - Closing Date Extended

The vacancy created by the retirement of current Division Director Athena Brown remains open. The closing date to apply has been extended until December 29, 2022. Interested applicants are encouraged to apply. Use the following links to the USAJOBS.gov website:

[Current Federal Employees](#)

[Other Applicants](#)

Workforce Development Specialist - Supervisor

The Workforce Development Specialist position, which would introduce a second supervisor to the Washington, DC office is also still open. That position closes on December 29, 2022. The following links have more details at the USAJOBS.gov website.

[Current Federal Employees](#)

[Other Applicants](#)

DOL Nursing Expansion Grant Program

This FOA will address bottlenecks in training the United States nursing workforce and expand and diversify the pipeline of qualified nursing professionals through two training tracks. The **first track (Nurse Education Professional Track)** will increase the number of clinical and vocational nursing instructors and educators by training new or upskilling experienced current or former nurses (including retired nurses) into advanced postsecondary credentialing necessary for nurses to become clinical and vocational nursing instructors and educators.

The **second track (Nursing Career Pathway Track)** will train frontline healthcare professionals and paraprofessionals, including direct care workers, to advance along a career pathway and attain postsecondary credentials needed for middle- to high-skilled nursing occupations during the grant period of performance. Native American Tribal Governments are eligible for this grant opportunity. Click the below link for additional information.

[Nursing Expansion Grant Program](#)

Region Successfully Meets in Phoenix Area

Western regional grantees met at the Wild Horse Pass Resort in Chandler, AZ on November 8–10, 2022. With almost 300 attendees, training was well-attended for both 166 and 477 grantees. Pictures from conference events can be found on the NINAETC FB page by [clicking here](#).

Planning for the annual convention, April 30 – May 4, 2023 at the Foxwoods Convention Center in Mashnattuck, CT began during the Phoenix event. More information about that event can be [found here](#).

Baby Buried With Care 10,000 Years Ago Found in Italian Cave

The rare interment suggests that some hunter-gatherer societies imbued female infants with full personhood

[https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/10000-year-old-burial-of-baby-found-in-italian-cave-180979224/?](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/10000-year-old-burial-of-baby-found-in-italian-cave-180979224/?utm_source=smithsoniandaily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20221222-daily-responsive&spMailingID=47793660&spUserID=OTYyNTc5MzkyMTQyS0&spJobID=2362605046&spReportId=MjM2MjYwNTA0NgS2)

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Indigenous Activists Criticize 'Avatar' Sequel

[https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/avatar-sequel-evokes-criticism-from-indigenous-activistsagain-180981351/?](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/avatar-sequel-evokes-criticism-from-indigenous-activistsagain-180981351/?utm_source=smithsoniandaily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20221222-daily-responsive&spMailingID=47793660&spUserID=OTYyNTc5MzkyMTQyS0&spJobID=2362605046&spReportId=MjM2MjYwNTA0NgS2)

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Water authority lays out Colorado River plan to protect Lake Mead, Lake Powell

The water authority on Tuesday outlined how it thinks the Colorado River basin states and the federal government can drastically cut back on water use along the dwindling Colorado next year.

Plenty for Nevada in year-end funding bill

The U.S. Senate approved a \$1.7 trillion omnibus package on Thursday; Nevada will receive \$167 million in community project funding.

Dude food is not patriotic – vegetables and moderation are more deeply rooted in the nation's early history

<https://news.yahoo.com/dude-food-not-patriotic-vegetables-121650565.html>

[Janine Winnemucca](#)

"We know and our ancestors knew that in order to show up for our communities as good relatives and as energized agents of change, we have to be grounded and strong. Replenishing your spirit in a time of growing social unrest is also a revolutionary act."

- SARAH SUNSHINE MANNING, NDN Collective

[#wintersolstice2022](#)

[NW Tribal Food Sovereignty Coalition](#)

[Today, Wednesday, December 21, marks the Winter Solstice and changing of the seasons. The Solstice occurs twice a year when either of Earth's poles reaches its ...](#)

[PBS NewsHour](#)

Scientists in Greenland have identified the oldest samples of DNA ever found on Earth. By analyzing this two-million year old genetic material, they've revealed that northern Greenland was once a wildly different environment. <https://to.pbs.org/3MzB3rB>



[dogloverclubpage.netlify.app](#)

[Super Rare Dwarf Kingfisher Photographed For The First Time After 130 Years Eluding Scientists](#)

[This fairy-like bird was first described in 1890, but it isn't until 130 years later that we finally have the chance to admire its beauty in high-resolution images. Meet the South Philippine dwarf kingfisher, a striking critter that is just too perfect to be true. Robert S. Kennedy Bird Conservanc...](#)

Northern Plains tribes bring back their wild 'relatives'

Native species such as swift foxes and black-footed ferrets disappeared from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation generations ago, wiped out by poisoning campaigns, disease and farm plows that turned open prairie where nomadic tribes once roamed into cropland and cattle pastures.

<https://www.startribune.com/northern-plains-tribes-bring-back-their-wild-relatives/600234142/>

Reminder: **Nominations for NEJAC Membership are Now Open until March 17, 2023**

[<Environmental-Justice@epa.gov>](mailto:Environmental-Justice@epa.gov)

Climate change is forcing Native Alaskans to move from their ancestral homes

<https://www.npr.org/2022/12/22/1144942195/climate-change-is-transforming-the-arctic-and-alaska-natives-are-on-the-frontlin>

Salmon People: A tribal fishing family's fight to preserve a way of life

<https://www.opb.org/article/2022/12/21/salmon-people-wy-kan-ush-pum-columbia-river-pacific-northwest-conservation-tribes-native/>

Goldendale, Washington, energy project would harm tribal resources, environmental impact statement finds

<https://www.opb.org/article/2022/12/22/goldendale-washington-energy-storage-tribal-environment-tribes-rock-creek-band-yakima-warm-springs/>



Animals Unlimited

"A photographer interrupted a snail while he was chowing down on a blade of grass. His face is priceless."