

LET'S MAKE

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TEA IN

SAMOVAR



Primeval Shaki samovar (Azerbaijan)

Later I was lucky to achieve invaluable success as I found myself in the middle of seizing hold of the **ancient samovar from clayey!** As regards this finding I received a special invitation from the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography under the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan. **Samovar - one of the most wonderful inventions of mankind is a combination of hearth and tableware.** Nowadays, people worldwide satisfactorily enjoy metal samovars in different shapes and settings. The samovars are made by Azeri, Iranian, Turkish craftsmen. However Russian craftsmen are also famous in

this context and especially the Tula samovar has gained a special value. In Russia manufacture of samovar was launched in late XVIII century in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yaroslavl and Arkhangelsk, and the first samovar factory was founded in Tula in 1778. But the evidence shows that

wouldboilanexcellentsdrink“sbiten” (hot beverage prepared from water, honey and spices) in samovar, which is nowadays left forgotten unfairly. Until the end of XVIII century it was cooked in special copper kettle, called “sakly”. However the “sakly” was designated for heating

SHEKI FINDING BECAME THE MOST IMPORTANT DISCOVERY, AS IT HAS BEEN AN ANCIENT ONE WHICH WAS FOUND FROM UNDER THE EARTH.

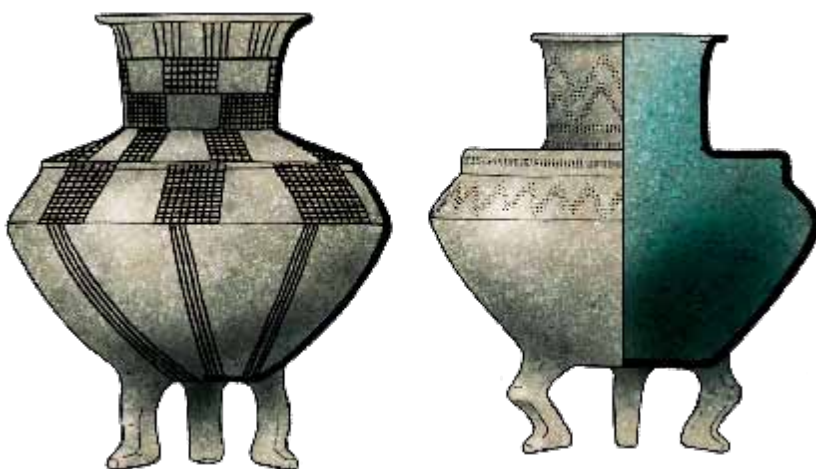
craftsmen from the village in Lahij region, Azerbaijan already used to produce copper samovar in 1130 AH (1714-1715 of the Gregorian calendar). It should be noted that in ancient Russia people

sbiten rather than cooking, and was used as thermos flask.

In Azerbaijan, beverage called “saalab” was also prepared in samovar, which was kept warm and served while hot. The similarity in terms of recipe, ingredient, storage conditions, distribution and even the simultaneous disappearance of these beverages is amazing.

Scholars of Russia find it difficult to prove the place of origin the samovar first came out. So far the one with the longest history over the world is considered to be Egyptian samovar, which is said to be 2,000 years old. Perhaps the predecessor for the Russian samovar could be Roman “as-teps”- rectangular open vessel, used to heat water for mixing with wine, or Chinese vessel “ho-go” for the delivery of hot broth and soup.

Scheme of primeval Samovar



The samovar of clayey recently found during archaeological excavations near Sheki town in Azerbaijan allows us to follow a different approach in dealing with this issue. Earlier, during the excavations clay Saj, Nehr, cauldrons, etc., were uncovered which later came in metallic forms, except that the samovar did not have clayey twin. **Shaki finding became the most important discovery, as it has been an ancient one which was found from under the earth.** Archaeologists estimate that Shaki clay samovar is more than 3,5 thousand years old, so it is much older than its Egyptian counterpart. "... Its flat bottom with round slot is incorporated into a through pipe, rising above the upper vessel. The outer surface of the vessel and especially the pipe is covered with soot. By all its features this vessel is designed for the use in the kitchen. The presence of air vent in the middle of pipe ... speeds up the process of heating (T.I. Akhundov, H.D.Mukhtarov.Moundwithancient samovar.ReportsformtheI Archaeological Conference in the Caucasus. Tbilisi, 1998, pp. 53-55).

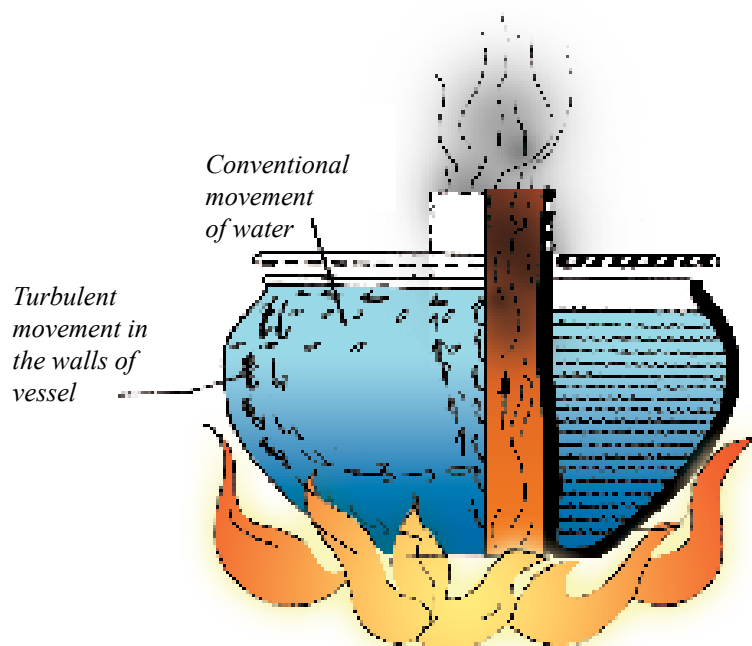
The figures display the appearance of the first samovars. They were placed on the stones at the fire (usually 3 stones at the edges), and later-on "sazhayag" (i.e. Saj's which is a hoop with three legs. Gradually legs and vessel were incorporated and hearth was left in between.

The invention of samovar in the history of culinary culture is remarkable for several reasons as follows:

1. Expansion of heating surface in samovar through the pipe which resulted in fuel savings.
2. For the first time hearth was made inside the vessel, the pipe was used for fire drawing



Imitation of Shaki samovar, found during the excavation together with the primeval samovar





The earthenware samovar and the teapot dated from XVII c. (Lenkoran Museum of History and Local Lore)

inside the tableware, which led to the most efficient use of heat use.

3. Efforts were made for the maximum equal distribution of heat across the whole surface of the vessel and to even heating of its ingredients accordingly. This feature is in general typical for Azerbaijani culinary culture. For example, in baking thin bread called "yukha" 2 mm thick and 1 m in diameter, heat should be evenly distributed across the surface of Saj (concave plate for baking bread) so that bread is not burned randomly. It was dealt with thanks to the slightly concave surface and by coating the lowest side (on the hearth side) of Saj with special mixture – "shira". Another example is cauldrons for pilau with special trapezoidal shapes and three layers: main copper layer in the middle and tinning layer on upper side and inside; as the temperature at the bottom of the cauldron and from the sides is

maintained on equal degree the pilau is not subject to burning.

It is very important that liquid inside the samovar warms not only from the bottom to the top, but from the sides along the pipe. So much so that in the thickness of heated water the mixing of different streams occurs. Heat streams mainly originate from the surface of pipe up to the top, presses the adjacent layers, and cold water descends from the surface of the vessel walls. The water makes a circular movement. As a result of such movement a turbulent circulation near the vessel walls emerge.

Such a complex movement of water and heat distribution creates so-called "samovar effect" – the specific flavor, which electric samovar lacks. By the way, in 1922-1935 in canteens and restaurants of the USSR people used "tea cubes". It was designed in a such way that water was heated evenly from all sides, and the samovar effect was achieved.

The Chinese identified 16 separate stages for boiling water, and be-

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lieved that for each stage of boiling there comes a peculiar taste. Most often three stages of boiling is applied in practice. The best one for extraction and especially in terms of taste and health is regarded boiling stage called "white key". This is the second stage of boiling water, when many bubbles emerge on the surface, and large masses, first provoke the turbidity, then al-bication of water. The origin of the phrase "white key boiling" should be traced back to this process. During

this time one can hear the steady sound, the same as the swarm of bees. At the third stage water intensively seethes, and then the splash-es appear. The sound grows, but the consistency disappears.

In general, the samovar is designed to produce high-quality water for making tea. It is important that samovar sends message that the boiling water is ready both visually and (or) through sound. At the first stage of boiling samovar "sings", on the second - main stage (white key), it "makes a noise", on the third - it "seethes". In each stage of boiling the ratio between the water-air in liquid medium, amount of oxygen dissolved in the liquid, the probability of heavy water appearance in boiling water changes. Changing of water-air balance in boiling liquid affects on extraction degree of soluble substances and essential oils of food substance to aqueous medium, notably on solution quality, its density, transparency, lightness, flavor and other indicators.

To change the taste of food by

manipulating with the ratio of the water-air is one of the turning points in the history of cookery. The first known attempt in this regard was made near Dashyuz village of Shaki region in Azerbaijan. The tradition of samovar tea making with its long history and that it has survived till nowadays attests to the importance of this finding. This was acknowledged by many researchers (see also: N. Kovaliev, N.P. Mogilny. Russian cuisine: Traditions and customs. M., 1990, p.256).



For strengthening the fire drawing later people in Azerbaijan started to apply additional pipe, placed over the main pipe. In Russia, in this case people used "jackboot". Moreover, in Azerbaijan started to apply so-called "brew machine (damkesh)" dressed over the samovar pipe - a small stand for the teapot.

Well, the only thing left is to make tea (coffee, sbiten, saalab), pour it into the "pear shaped" glasses and

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while listening to the samovar singing, express acknowledgment to the ancient craftsmen of Sheki for their contribution.

This article deals with the history of samovar and the way how it functions, the appearance of "samovar effect" –

best known for its unique flavor of tea, prepared in samovar. The key focus is made on the recent discovery of ancient clayey samovar, made during archaeological excavations in Azerbaijan, near Sheki town. ❀