

Community Engagement & Education DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Tea Time

A Film by Maite Alberdi







**Tea Time** takes us through a rite of friendship and shows the importance of traditions and celebrations and how rituals can help life make sense. The rite of **Tea Time** allows us to enter a female private space, from which life is interpreted. Around the table, intimate and universal themes intersect and are analyzed from the particular perspective of elderly women who look at the world through the lens of their conservative backgrounds, and who have been forced to adapt.

As a granddaughter of one of the characters, I have been observing this monthly rite since childhood, and I have always seen the women in the same way: They have never aged. I'm interested in portraying this new way of living old age—in which new possibilities arise, though inevitably, they may be the last ones.

Maite Alberdi Director. Tea Time



Filmmaker Maite Alberdi. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes



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Ritual is often associated with powerful and impersonal institutions, but for five Chilean women, ritual centers on a monthly gathering that has sustained them through 60 years of personal and societal change. **Tea Time** (52 min.) captures the charm and poignancy of a seemingly mundane routine of tea and pastries that has helped the well-heeled participants commemorate life's joys and cope with infidelity, illness and death. A celebration of the small things that help us endure, **Tea Time**, filmed over five years, illuminates a beautiful paradox: As familiar worlds slip away, friendships grow ever stronger and more profound. In a world that sometimes seems to be dominated by "mean girls" and cyberbullying, these women remain models of civility; despite disagreements, and even disapproval, they cherish their longstanding bonds.



Nina Chicarelli, Angélica Charpentier, Ximena Calderón and Alicia Pérez. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes





**Tea Time** is well suited for use in a variety of settings and is especially recommended for use with:

- Your local PBS station
- Groups that have discussed previous PBS and POV films relating to women, Chile, aging or friendship, including Nostalgia for the Light, Acting Our Age, The Way We Get By, The Genius of Marian, Ping Pong and 56 Up.
- Groups focused on any of the issues listed in the Key Issues section
- Senior centers and elder hostel programs
- Women's clubs
- Faith-based organizations and institutions
- Cultural, art and historical organizations, institutions and museums
- Civic, fraternal and community groups
- Academic departments and student groups at colleges, universities and high schools
- Community organizations with a mission to promote education and learning, such as local libraries.

**Tea Time** is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of special interest to people looking to explore the following topics:

- aging
- Chile
- death/dying
- dementia/Alzheimer's
- food
- friendship
- gender roles
- health
- life cycle events
- marriage
- religion
- ritual
- socioeconomic class
- tea time rituals
- values
- widows
- women's groups
- women's rights

### **USING THIS GUIDE**

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection, designed for people who want to use **Tea Time** to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues and communities. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. And be sure to leave time to consider taking action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit www.pov.org/engage





### Chilean Tea Time: Las Once

Taken in the early evening before a late supper, Chile's *las* once is a light meal steeped in history. *Las once* is believed to have its roots in both English afternoon tea and colonial Spanish mealtimes—namely that the Spanish habit of eating an early lunch and a late supper necessitated an early evening repast. The phrase *las once* supposedly has its origins in mining, as a consequence of ley seca, or prohibition. Miners who wanted to take a break to drink aguardiente (a type of hard liquor, and an 11-letter word) in the late afternoon said they were taking *las once* (meaning "the eleven" in Spanish) as code. Another theory is that the name *las* once—and the custom of tea time—is modeled after the English custom of "elevenses," meaning that *las once* was an attempt to translate literally the English word picked up from 19th-century British settlers in Chile. The 11:00

a.m. tea time was eventually moved to a later time

Ximena Calderón and Alicia Perez. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes

of the day, but its name and its significance in Chile remained unchanged.

Las once is traditionally taken between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., and the fare is often light—along the lines of cakes, jam, cheese, fruit and bread—and is served with tea and other beverages. While traditional fresh Chilean bread such as marraqueta or hallulla, is still served alongside manjar (Chile's version of dulce de leche) or mashed avocado, in recent decades *las once* has become a more multicultural affair, integrating German-style donuts, English Victoria sponge cake and U.S.-style iced tea. The tea served is almost all imported, as tea is only grown on a very small scale in Chile, though the demand for domestically grown tea has started to increase.





The table set for tea time. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes

As essential to *las once* as the food is the company. The meal generally coincides with the end of the work day, a time when Chileans invite friends and family over. The meal can be either a casual affair, with just family or a few close friends, or a more formal occasion, perhaps a birthday celebration, necessitating a proper invitation, china and silver. According to anthropologist Sonia Montecino, *las once* has historically had particular significance for women. Since the roles of cook and hostess blend in the ritual of *las once*, and the meal historically provided an opportunity for women to socialize without compromising the traditional Chilean women's duties as the primary cooks and caretakers for their families. Today, *las once* is a common daily occurrence enjoyed by Chileans of all ages, genders and backgrounds.

#### Sources:

Baez Kijac, Maria. *The South American Table.* Boston: Harvard Common Press, 2003.

Collier, Simon. *A History of Chile, 1808-2002.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

This Is Chile. "Once: A Guide to Chile's Oddly-named Evening Snack." http://www.thisischile.cl/once-a-guide-to-chiles-oddly-named-eveningsnack/?lang=en



## **Timeline of Major Events in Chile**

Over the course of the years that the women in **Tea Time** have been meeting, Chile has undergone numerous political and social changes. Here's a brief timeline of some of the major events in the country.

**1949 -** Women in Chile gain the right to vote in national elections.

**September 1952 -** The era of the Radical Party, a dissenting liberal party that strove for a secular Chile, comes to an end as Carlos Ibáñez del Campo returns to the presidency.

**May 1960 -** The Valdivia earthquake, or Great Chilean Earthquake, occurs. It is the most powerful earthquake ever recorded and results in between 2,200 and 6,000 casualties.

June 1962 - Chile's national soccer team places third in the FIFA World Cup.

**September 1970 -** Marxist presidential candidate Salvador Allende Gossens is elected, despite the interference of the governments of other countries, including the United States. Allende's previous bid in 1964 was hindered by U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, which provided funding and support for his Christian Democratic opponent, Eduardo Frei Montalva.

**October 1971 -** Chilean author Pablo Neruda wins the Nobel Prize in Literature.

June 1974 - General Augusto Pinochet rises to the presidency in the wake of the 1973 Chilean military coup d'état he led (and during the course of which Allende died). Pinochet establishes a military junta. Over the next 17 years, repression of political opponents by the military regime results in more than 130,000 arrests and at least 2,000 deaths or "disappearances."

**October 1989 -** A referendum on the 1980 Chilean constitution, which takes places in part as a result of increasing international pressure, votes Pinochet out of power. The transition back to democracy begins.

**March 1990 -** Patricio Aylwin becomes the first president of Chile after the restoration of democracy.

**August-October 1991 -** Mount Hudson, in southern Chile, erupts in one of the largest volcanic eruptions of the 20th century, but no one is killed.

**October 1998 -** Pinochet is arrested in London. The arrest warrant is eventually overturned, but the arrest begins a multiyear international legal and political struggle between Pinochet supporters and opponents. Simultaneously, the Chilean economy enters a crisis and years of inflation and unemployment result.

May 2004 - Chile legalizes divorce.

**November-December 2004 –** The Chilean army takes responsibility for human rights violations under the Pinochet regime. Pinochet faces a series of indictments and periods of arrest until his death in 2006.

**March 2006 -** Michelle Bachelet is sworn in as Chile's first female president.

**February 2010 -** A magnitude 8.8 earthquake, the sixth largest recorded earthquake, occurs off the Chilean coast, resulting in damages of an estimated \$15-30 billion and more than 500 deaths.

**August-October 2010 -** A cave-in results in 33 miners being trapped underground for 69 days. All survive and are safely rescued.

**July 2012 -** After being struck down multiple times over many years, an anti-discrimination law is signed by Chile's president.

#### Sources:

Alexander, Robert J. *The Tragedy of Chile*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1978.

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Pescatello, Ann M. *Female and Male in Latin America: Essays.* Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh, 1973.







# Selected People Featured in Tea Time



Ximena Calderón Widow of a former army officer; among the most conservative in the group.



Nina Chicarelli The least talkative of the group; when she does speak, she is often not on camera.



**Gema Droguett** Never married; she leans toward the traditional.



Inés Krisch

Becomes more active in the group late in the film; suffers from memory loss.





# Selected People Featured in Tea Time



### María Teresa Muñoz

Tends to say whatever is on her mind; often sings; worries about her special needs daughter, Francisca; at the end of the film, passes away from kidney disease.



### Alicia Pérez

Talkative and inquisitive, she shares her old home economics notes with the group.



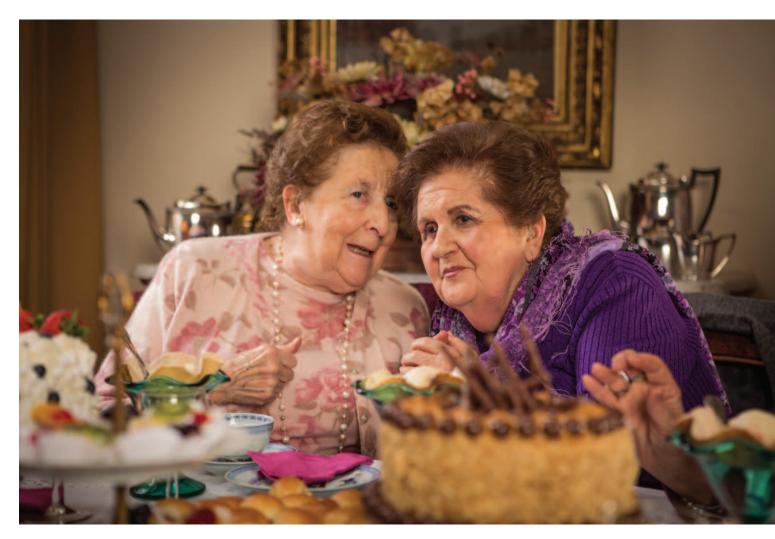
#### **Angélica Charpentier**

Looks conservative, but is often the one prompting conversations that stray into the risqué.









Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen or pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion:

- If you could ask anyone in the film a single question, whom would you ask and what would you ask them?
- What did you learn from this film?
- If a friend asked you what this film was about, what would you say?

Angélica Charpentier and Ximena Calderón. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes

- Describe a moment or scene in the film that you found particularly disturbing or moving. What was it about that scene that was especially compelling for you?
- How did the film make you feel?







# Friendship

If someone recorded your gatherings with friends, what would viewers of that footage see and hear? How would it compare to the film? What topics are typically included in your conversations that are absent from the conversations in the film and vice versa?

María Teresa knows that even when she says things that upset the others, "The girls will still love me even if they get mad, because they're my lifelong friends." What do you expect of friends? Where did you learn what to expect?

Do you still keep in contact with childhood friends? What are the obstacles to maintaining those formative relationships? What factors do you think allowed these women to maintain contact?

As the women pray for Gema's health, they acknowledge that their numbers are diminishing. How do they cope with loss and the passing of friends? María Teresa Muñoz, Angélica Charpentier, Ximena Calderón and Alicia Pérez. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes

The women make toasts to events such as anniversaries and deaths. What sorts of things do you commemorate and how do you honor them?

Clearly the women don't always agree or approve of one another's choices. How do they express disagreement? What do you learn from them about how to challenge the opinions or actions of others and still remain friends?

Why do you think a film about friendship begins with macro shots of food preparation? What thoughts or emotions did those images evoke for you?





# Aging

What sorts of challenges do the women face as they age that they did not have to deal with as young women? What wisdom has come with age that was not present in their youth?

One of the women's rituals is pulling out their compacts and freshening their lipstick, a signal that they are still concerned with their appearance. Why do you think their makeup is important to them? When they discuss their wrinkles and sagging faces, Nina points out, "It happens to all of us." So why do they lament these changes? Why are changes in physical appearance especially important to them as women?

Alicia says, "Hey, girls, I woke up and looked in the mirror and I looked just like my mother." Have you ever had one of those "I'm my mother" or "I'm my father" moments? How did it affect you?

A group photo. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes

María Teresa's daughter, Francisca, has a developmental disability, and Alicia notes that María Teresa "always worries, and wonders...what will happen to [Francisca] when she's gone." What could communities do to ensure that adults with special needs are taken care of after their parents pass? How would that help parents like María Teresa?

The women share their old photos, love letters and school papers. What role do these artifacts play in our lives and in shaping our memories? How do the things that the women saved provide comfort? Spark conversation? What do you save? How has the digital world influenced what we save and how do you imagine it will change life for the next generation of friends like the women in the film?





A maid preparing food. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes

Alicia says, "Don't live out of yellowing pictures." Do you think this is good advice? What's the difference between recalling fond memories and living in the past?

María Teresa is undergoing dialysis and except for staying alive for her daughter, she isn't sure it is worth it to keep going. How do you/will you make decisions about how much medical care to undergo?

Inés says, "I was about to ask something to Ximena, but I lost the thread. What a hassle, that happens often at this age. You're thinking on something to say, and if you don't say it right away you forget it." Though serious memory lapses are not an automatic outcome of old age, everyone seems to accept what's happening to Inés as normal. Why do you think that is? What do they do to include her despite her worsening condition?

# **Marriage and Gender Roles**

Alicia reads from her home economics notebook:

In a family, the father and the mother have different obligations. While the father must provide money to meet the needs of the family, the mother is responsible for household administration and to ensure the health and happiness of the family. To properly fulfill all these duties she must have the following knowledge: First, hygiene. Second: good character, understanding, zeal, tolerance, prudence, self-control...A job away from home at first may look quite beneficial. But when we analyze it we see the advantage of staying at home, as the housewife will spare the dangers her absence may bring to the health and morale of her children left at the care of servants.

Inés approves, noting, "All that it says is true." What do you think? Is the notebook filled with timeless wisdom, or is it hopelessly outdated (or a bit of both)?









The reading of Alicia's old home economics notebook provokes a discussion about women and work. María Teresa recalls that "Back then, I wouldn't even think about having a job," but now "Women do it all, everything now." Nina says, "It was much better when women stayed at home taking care of their family." Do you think Nina is right?

Alicia says, "The truth is we were raised to get married." For the women in this group, getting married and working outside the home were mutually exclusive. Why would that have been the case? What would working outside the home signal that they wanted to avoid?

Angélica says, "I think men are intimately unfaithful. Unfaithful by nature." She even notes that everyone in the Bible was a polygamist. Do you agree with Angélica?

 Recalling her vow at the altar to remain married until death, Angélica forgave her husband for cheating, but that created a rift with her daughters. They think, she says,
"That his behavior doesn't make him worthy of any-

Angélica Charpentier and Ximena Calderón. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes

thing. They don't forgive him." In contrast, Alicia says, "I think it's heroic when the woman forgives, or when the man forgives too." Do you see it as "heroic"? Would you forgive cheating? Why or why not?

Ximena recalls that her husband was "a male chauvinist" who was "very hard to live with...In the end I didn't need him. And I was more than I thought I could be by myself." What else did the widows learn about marriage and themselves from the deaths of their husbands?

Reflecting on their marriages, Inés says, "Love goes away, it comes to an end." Alicia comments, "I think it evolves." And Nina concludes, "But it's good to be in love." What are your thoughts on love?



# **Sexual Mores**

Angélica asks, "Who knew about the wedding night when you got married?" What did you think of the answers given by the women in the film? Whether or not you've been married, how would you have answered a question like this?

The women recall that in their youth, conversations about sex were taboo. What are the pros and cons of today's more open approach to sex education?

Are there any conversation topics (sexual or not) that are taboo among your friends or family today? Why do you think those topics are off limits? What do the taboo topics convey about your family's or culture's values?

Recalling warnings about the importance of preserving one's reputation, María Teresa asks, "So, how come these young girls don't love themselves more?" Do you see current attitudes towards sex as a sign that girls and women today value themselves less than girls and women of previous generations?

Angélica observes, "Virginity is over; it's no longer a value. Now any girl with a boyfriend has sex. In these times I think none marries being a virgin." Some of the women see this as evidence of an evolution in values. Others see it as a loss of values. As Alicia puts it, "There has been too much evolution in our time." Which position better matches your own view?

Angélica remarks, "It's incredible how lesbianism has spread." Alicia sees this as part of the decline of family values, commenting, "I think homosexuality and lesbianism are the result of all that." If you had been at the table, what would you have said?

María Teresa talks about a film that includes lesbians. What role does popular culture play in shaping values and effecting change? Can you think of a particular instance where your own ideas were influenced by mass media?

# **Religion and Culture**

During a major international soccer match, Nina remarks, "All men are in front of their TVs." But the women also seem interested and are quick to offer an enthusiastic cheer for the Chilean team. Why would the women think of soccer as being men's domain, even as they follow the game?

Where do you see clues about the ways in which economic privilege shapes these women's lives? How about culture, religion and the particular times through which they have lived?

We see maids on the periphery in a number of scenes. What was your response to those scenes? What does the presence of maids indicate about class and culture in the film?

How would you describe the role of prayer in the women's lives? How does prayer supply words at difficult moments?

Alicia offers these thoughts as they toast María Teresa's memory:

Mention me as ever, talk about me as ever. And not differently. Don't get sad nor solemn. Laugh about the things that always made us laugh. Cheer up and think about me. Pray for me. Talk about me as you've ever done, without emotion and no hint of sadness. Am I going to disappear from your life because you don't see me? I'm not far, just at the other side of the road.

How does this compare to your own wishes? How does the belief in heaven provide Alicia and the others with the strength to cope with death?

Additional media literacy questions are available at: www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php

DISCUSSION GUIDE







Nina Chicarelli and Angélica Charpentier. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes

### **Taking Action**

- Organize your own monthly tea time or "friendship club" with former classmates, teammates, bunkmates from summer camp, scout troop, neighbors or anyone who shares a significant moment of personal history with you.
- Host an intergenerational dialogue group to discuss issues raised in the film related to marriage, gender roles and/or sexual mores.
- Designate a "family history" weekend when everyone gathers to go through old photos, letters and memorabilia to share stories, decide what to keep and take any necessary steps to ensure that important items are preserved.
- Create a support group for widows and/or an intentional welcoming plan to integrate widows into community activities after their spouses have passed.





#### FILMMAKER WEBSITE

#### www.teatimethemovie.com

For more detailed information about the film, see the film's official website, available in English and Spanish.

# **Original Online Content on POV**

To further enhance the broadcast, POV has produced an interactive website to enable viewers to explore the film in greater depth. The **Tea Time** website—www.pbs.org/pov/teatime — offers a streaming video trailer for the film; an interview with the filmmaker; a list of related websites, articles and books; a downloadable discussion guide; a standards-aligned lesson plan; a downloadable reading list; and special features.

### TIMELINES OF HISTORY: "TIMELINE CHILE" http://timellnes.ws/countries/CHILE.HTML

This year-by-year list of major political and cultural events in Chile provides historical context for the decades during which the women were meeting.

### THIS IS CHILE

#### http://www.thisischile.cl

An official Chilean site containing information on culture, history and a variety of other topics significant to the country, women's issues and the ritual of *las once*.



### HOW TO BUY THE FILM

For information on how to purchase **Tea Time**, visit http://www.teatimethemovie.com



Produced by American Documentary, Inc., POV is public television's premier showcase for nonfiction films. The series airs Mondays at

10 p.m. on PBS from June to September, with primetime specials during the year. Since 1988, POV has been the home for the world's boldest contemporary filmmakers, celebrating intriguing personal stories that spark conversation and inspire action. Always an innovator, POV discovers fresh new voices and creates interactive experiences that shine a light on social issues and elevate the art of storytelling. With our documentary broadcasts, original online programming and dynamic community engagement campaigns, we are committed to supporting films that capture the imagination and present diverse perspectives.

POV films have won 32 Emmy® Awards, 18 George Foster Peabody Awards, 12 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards®, the first-ever George Polk Documentary Film Award and the Prix Italia. The POV series has been honored with a Special News & Documentary Emmy Award for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking, two IDA Awards for Best Continuing Series and the National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP) Award for Corporate Commitment to Diversity. More information is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

#### POV Digital www.pbs.org/pov

Since 1994, POV Digital has driven new storytelling initiatives and interactive production for POV. The department created PBS's first program website and its first web-based documentary (*POV's Borders*) and has won major awards, including a Webby Award (and six nominations) and an Online News Association Award. POV Digital continues to explore the future of independent nonfiction media through its digital productions and the POV Hackathon lab, where media makers and technologists collaborate to reinvent storytelling forms. @povdocs on Twitter.

Front cover: Juanita Vásquez, Nina Chicarelli, Angélica Charpentier, Ximena Calderón, Alicia Pérez. Photo courtesy of Alvaro Reyes

#### **POV Community Engagement and Education**

POV's Community Engagement and Education team works with educators, community organizations and PBS stations to present more than 650 free screenings every year. In addition, we distribute free discussion guides and standards-aligned lesson plans for each of our films. With our community partners, we inspire dialogue around the most important social issues of our time.

#### American Documentary, Inc. www.amdoc.org

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc is a catalyst for public culture, developing collaborative strategic engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation.

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# hicarelli, hor, Alicia Pérez. You can follow us on Twitter @POVengage for the latest news from POV Community Engagement & Education.



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