

The Simple Guide to Tea



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What is Tea?

Tea is a wonderfully diverse beverage made by steeping leaves of the tea bush in hot water for a few minutes. Tea can be served either hot or cold, as in iced tea.

The tea leaves come from a plant known as the *Camellia Sinensis*. Over 50% of the world's tea production is done in China and India. Kenya, Sri Lanka/Ceylon, and Turkey make up another 25%. Other Asian countries, Argentina and Uganda make up most of the remaining 25%.

There are 'alternative' teas such as flowers, fruits, herbs, and spices; these are known as tisanes. They are not considered to be a true tea but can be enjoyed just as much.

Rooibos (Roy -bus) is becoming more popular and is a naturally

caffeine free tea. It is also known as 'red bush' and it is grown in South Africa.



Tea plants are cultivated every seven to ten days during the growing season and are maintained at waist height to aid the plucking of the leaves. If not maintained on a regular basis, the bush would grow into a tree. The two leaves and a bud are called flushes.

The high quality teas are grown in elevations up to 1500 metres (5000ft). Due to the high elevations, the plants grow more slowly and acquire a better flavour.



A Brief History

It is believed that tea was 'discovered' by an ancient Chinese Emperor almost 5000 years ago, who was boiling hot water one day whilst he sat under a tea bush.

Some of the leaves fell from the bush into his cup and started to infuse in the hot water. He enjoyed the resulting beverage and started to experiment with different varieties.

Who knows if this is true, but what *is* known, is that the Chinese have been drinking tea for thousands of years and have been enjoying its medicinal benefits ever since.

Types of Tea

There are four main types of tea. Black (Earl Grey and English Breakfast), Oolong (Wuyi or Pouchong), Green (Gunpowder and Pekoe), and White Tea

(Peony). Each type of tea is grown in different regions. You can have a black tea from the Yunnan region of China or the Darjeeling Estate in India.

The amount of oxygen the leaves are allowed to absorb during processing also determines the type of tea that is made. White tea is the least processed, black teas have the longest oxidation period, while Oolong has a shorter oxidation period. White and green tea does not go through any oxidation.





The Tea Process

Withering - Tea is placed on a trough and hot air is blown through to reduce the moisture content; this makes the leaf easier to manipulate during the rolling stage.

Rolling - The leaf is twisted while rollers apply pressure to it in order to release cell-sap onto the leaf. The enzymes and other chemicals react and oxidation starts. The shaking, shaping, or cutting also takes place at this stage.

Oxidation - This is the process where oxygen is absorbed by the leaf; this changes the colour of the leaf and is the main factor in determining the type of tea produced.

Firing/Drying - The leaves are dried to stop the oxidation process.

Sorting/Grading - Sieves are used to sort and grade the tea. Smaller leaves fall to the bottom and are generally used in tea bags.

Blending and Additives

The quality of tea can vary from month to month depending on the environmental conditions before the leaves are picked. To ensure a more consistent flavour, teas from many areas are blended together. This process allows the better tasting teas to cover the more inferior teas, giving an overall more constant taste.

The characteristics of tea allow it to absorb the properties of items it is stored with or containers it is stored in. This allows for a great variety of different flavours by adding additives such as strawberry, mango, or melon.

The Tea Process



Health Benefits of Tea

Tea is a natural source of amino acids, caffeine, and antioxidants. The antioxidants in tea help the body fight naturally occurring free radicals which are present within our body. Free radicals attack good cells in the body and can cause such medical problems as cancer and dementia.

The European Journal of Clinical Nutrition released an article explaining why tea is better than water because not only does it provide fluid intake, but you get the added benefits of the antioxidants contained in the tea.

The Journal of the American Medical Association published an article saying five cups of green tea each day can cut the risk of dying from heart disease by about a third.

The University College of London conducted research on the calming affect of tea and showed that tea drinkers had a lower count of cortisol, the stress hormone that is thought to play an important role in heart disease.



The University of Geneva indicated that green tea raises the metabolic rate and speeds up fat oxidation, helping weight loss. Weight loss will only work when combined with good eating habits and exercise.

The Simple Guide to Tea

The Fourth International Scientific Symposium on Tea and Human Health presented research that showed tea may help prevent Dementia, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's disease by improving the brain's ability to focus.

There are numerous reports and research on the benefits of tea and comparisons of black, green, oolong, or white. So, which one do you drink?

All teas come from the same plant so they will all have some benefits. The secret is to find teas you like and drink four or five cups a day in whatever combination suits your needs and tastes.

Have a nice Black tea such as Yunnan Jig in the morning, try a nice Oolong tea like Wuyi just after lunch, relax with a Green tea at dinner, and try one of the

naturally decaffeinated teas such as Rooibos later in the evening.



Medicinal Benefits

Peppermint - aids digestion and soothes the stomach.

Chamomile - Creates a calming effect.

Yerba Mate - Energizes and remedies the body.





Tea Preparation

The way tea is made is important to only one person; whoever is drinking it. If it allows you to sit back, relax, and enjoy the great taste, then that is the best way to make your tea. We all have our individual tastes and preferences so please use this guides as just that; a guide to making tea. If your tea is not strong enough, try adding a little more; too strong, a little less. The important thing is not to steep or brew for too long as this makes the tea bitter.

More care needs to be taken with black and green tea. Some oolongs and herbals can be brewed for a little longer and still have a wonderful flavour. Try steeping Oolong more than once; it can give just as good a cup on the second steeping.

Quantity

The amount of tea used is important but don't go to the extremes of measuring each amount. Instead, start with one teaspoon of tea per cup. If you are making yourself a single cup of tea, then just use one teaspoon. If you are using a teapot which serves three cups, use three teaspoons. After you have made a few cups, you will have a better idea of the quantity of tea that is right for your taste.



Tea Preparation

Temperature

Black, dark oolong, and herbal teas should be steeped with boiling water 100°C (212°F); they can take the heat. Care needs to be taken with green, light oolong, and white teas. Use water at 80°C (180°F). Boil the water and leave for a couple of minutes before pouring over the tea leaves. You should always use fresh water; the oxygen in the fresh water works with the leaves to release the flavour.

Time

Let black tea steep for five minutes, and dark oolong and white teas for seven minutes. Light oolong and green teas need a little extra care; steep for only three minutes. The most important thing is not to steep for too long as this will make the tea bitter.

Now that you have read all the rules, think about this. We all have different tastes; experiment and enjoy the experience of making your perfect cup of tea.



Caffeine, Decaf, Caffeine Free

One of the big talking points is whether tea contains less caffeine than coffee. In its dry state tea does contain more caffeine, but the important time to measure the caffeine is just before you drink it. Black tea brewed for five minutes has about 40 milligrams, oolong about 30mgs, green about 20mgs, and white about 15mgs.

Teabags containing broken leaves of a smaller size produce an infusion with slightly more caffeine than loose leaf tea. Coffee of the same volume yields about 80mgs; double that of a black tea. Caffeine in tea is also more soluble in water than coffee. This allows the caffeine in tea to pass through your body faster.

There are two methods to decaffeinate tea. You can use chemicals or pass carbon dioxide

gas through the leaves.

Chemicals are cheaper but there may be a risk of the chemical residue being left on the leaves. Carbon dioxide gas is more expensive but is considered safer as no chemicals are used.

You can also decaf your own tea. Make your tea as usual, pour in the water, and then after 30 seconds, drain the water. The majority of caffeine is released in those 30 seconds. Add more water and enjoy your decaffeinated tea.

To go caffeine free, try an herbal tea, such as Berry Blues or a Rooibos tea.



Teabags or Loose Tea?

Teabags are a relatively new invention, introduced in 1904, and are the main way people serve their tea. Teabags contain fanning's, the smallest part of the tea leaf and also the poorest quality. These are then placed into the bag which restricts movement.

Good quality tea is made from loose leaf tea. It is allowed to unfurl and expand in a body of water, delivering a far superior flavour.

New technology, such as pyramid tea bags, allows larger leaves to be placed into the tea bags, improving taste.

To really enjoy the experience and true flavour, try a quality loose leaf tea.

Storage

Tea should be stored away from light and humidity. Glass jars can be used as long as they are opaque. The best solution is to store the tea in an air tight tin. If stored correctly, tea can be stored for over twelve months. Tea has the ability to take on flavours from whatever it comes into contact with, so do not use plastic. Tea's ability to absorb is why we have so many different flavoured teas, such as Strawberry and Mango.





Recipes

Iced Lemon Tea

Ingredients

5 tsp lemon grass
1 litre freshly boiled water

Optional
Sugar or honey

You can substitute the lemon with peppermint, berry blues, or lemon ginger rose.



Directions

1. Put the kettle on to boil.
2. Put 5 heaped tsp of loose leaf tea into your jug.
3. Pour freshly boiled water over the tea.
4. Steep for 7 minutes
5. Drain the tea through a sieve.
6. Leave tea to cool and then place in the fridge.
7. Add ice to your glass and pour over delicious lemon tea.

Sit back, relax, enjoy

Darjeeling Cookies

Ingredients

Five heaped teaspoons

Darjeeling tea

Sugar cookie mix

115grams melted butter

Directions

1. Melt the butter in a bowl.
2. Add three teaspoons of the Darjeeling tea.
3. Leave to steep for 10 minutes.
4. Pour cookie mix into large bowl.
5. Gradually add the melted butter through a large holed sieve or you could try your infuser.
6. Use a mortar and pestle or other method to grind the remaining leaves into a powder.
7. Add tea powder to cookie mix and butter.
8. Bake cookies as directed on the packet.



Eat and enjoy.

Darjeeling Chai

Ingredients

750ml of water

250ml milk

6 tsp of Darjeeling tea.

1/4 tsp of ground cinnamon

1/4 tsp of ground cardamom

1/4 tsp of ground black pepper

1/4 tsp ground ginger powder

Pinch of ground cloves



Directions

1. Boil 750ml of water in a pan.

2. Add 6 tsp of Darjeeling to the freshly boiling water.

3. Steep for 5 minutes. (no more or it will get too bitter)

4. Remove the tea leaves and add the spices.

5. Simmer for 5 minutes.

6. Add 250ml of milk.

7. Bring to the boil and serve.

Green Pekoe Pound Cake

Ingredients

1 pack (500g) yellow cake mix.
1 pack (100g) instant vanilla pudding mix.
200ml olive oil
3 tablespoons Green Pekoe tea
200ml water
4 eggs



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 175°C (350°F)
2. Grease and flour a cake tin.
3. Prepare 200ml green tea. Boil the water and let it sit for a couple of minutes before pouring over the green tea.
4. Steep for 3 mins then remove tea leaves with infuser or sieve.
5. Combine cake mix, vanilla mix, oil, and tea.
6. Beat until moist and add eggs.
7. Mix for 6-8 minutes on medium speed until batter is thick.
8. Pour into cake tin and bake for 50-60 mins.
9. Remove from oven, leave to cool, and then eat.

Oolong Ice Tea Spritzer

Ingredients

2 heaped tsps of Oolong tea
1 cup white cranberry juice,
peach flavour
1/2 cup vodka
1/2 cup white or dark rum
Ice cube
Crushed ice
Sprite or 7-Up



Directions

1. Make one cup of Oolong tea as normal.
 2. Mix tea, juice, alcohol, and ice cubes.
 3. Half fill 4 hi-ball glasses with crushed ice.
 4. Pour tea evenly into the four glasses.
 5. Top up with Sprite or 7-Up.
- Give it a quick stir and
ahhhhhhhh.

Jasmine Bread Pudding

Ingredients

8-10 slices of cubed bread

2 cans of condensed milk

1 tsp Jasmine tea

100ml water

120ml whipping cream

110g butter



Directions

1. Preheat oven to 175°F (350°C)

2. Lightly grease a pan.

3. Arrange bread slices.

4. Make tea with 100ml freshly boiled water and steep for 5 mins.

5. In separate bowl, mix the tea with 60ml whipping cream.

6. Pour over bread and bake in oven for 30-45 mins.

Just before bread pudding is ready.

7. Mix condensed milk, butter, and remaining whipped cream.

8. Place over medium heat until bubbling.

9. Pour over bread pudding and enjoy.

Spearmint Truffles

Ingredients

200 grams of semi-sweet
chocolate

1/2 cup of whipping cream

4 tablespoons unsalted butter

5 tsps spearmint tea



Directions

1. Melt chocolate in a pan over a low heat.

2. Gradually add whipping cream

3. Mix chocolate and cream well;
do not overheat.

4. Add butter and continue
stirring until all ingredients are
blended.

5. Remove from heat and add
spearmint tea.

6. Put mixture into the fridge for 6
hours or overnight until it
hardens.

7. Scoop out mixture and roll
into balls.

8. Make a lovely cup of tea and
enjoy with your chocolates.

Drinking tea is an experience to be savoured not rushed.



Make your tea, drink, relax and enjoy the moment.

Health benefits of tea, links to research.

[European Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#)

[Journal of the American Medical Association](#)

[University College of London](#)

[University of Geneva](#)

[Fourth International Scientific Symposium on Tea](#)



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