



Time for Tea!

Leader Guide

Lesson objectives:

- ◆ Discover how tea has become one of the most popular drinks of the world.
- ◆ Examine some of the claims of health benefits of tea.
- ◆ Experience flavors and fragrances of the various kinds and types of tea and herb infusions.
- ◆ Appreciate the cultural significance of drinking teas and other herbal beverages.

Lesson Preparation:

- Make several varieties of tea to taste at the lesson. Bring both bagged and loose tea to demonstrate the different ways tea can be made. Make at least one black, oolong, and green tea. Have an herbal tea available for those that may not drink tea because of the caffeine content. (Try rooibos, or red bush for something international and different.) You may wish to serve SIMPLE refreshments with the tea. Ask members to bring assigned teas or tea pots, cups, infusers, tea cozies and/or refreshments. Have each participant bring a cup and saucer; bring a few extra for those who forgot or for guests.
- Obtain a Stash Tea Catalog (call 1-800-826-4218) or Upton Tea Quarterly (1-800-234-8327) to show your group the vast choices of tea that are available.
- Prepare yourself by going to a tea house or kitchen supply store and talk to the proprietor about tea supplies. If you cannot go to a store, go to the internet (see end of lesson for sites) and read about supplies that are available to make tea. (Most public libraries have internet access. Ask the librarian for help, if needed.)
- Take time to enjoy this lesson – plan on 1 ½ - 2 hours. Make a party out of it, but don't forget to cover the lesson in the festivities.

Introduction:

Ask participants to share with the group by answering the following question: What does “having a cup of tea” mean to you? If the group is large, divide them into groups of five or six to share their story. Have each group summarize what they shared.

Say: “In the hustle and bustle of life today, it is refreshing to take a break, sit down by yourself or with friends and enjoy a hot beverage. Taking breaks to rest and relieve the stress of the day can make a difference in our attitude and in our health. For many people this is done around a “cup of tea”. So let's take time for a cup of tea today.”

What is Tea?

Tea is one of the oldest and newest fad drinks today—chai, herb tea, fruit drinks with tea, green tea, white tea, black tea, red tea and more (the newest fad – bubble tea). Tea was first consumed in China and is now consumed by more than half the world's population. Tea is an aromatic stimulant, containing various polyphenols, essential oils, and caffeine.

The tea plant is a native of Southeast Asia and in addition to all of Asia, is now grown in mountainous areas of South America, Africa, and Turkey. It is all the same plant, *Camellia sinensis*, first cultivated in China

and found growing wild in India. Whether it is black, oolong, green or white depends on where the tea was grown and then how the tea is processed. There are more than 3,000 varieties of tea, each with its own flavor, body, color and aroma.

Leaf buds and young leaves are used in making tea, the age of leaves determining the taste and the name of the particular commercial variety. Orange pekoe is made from the youngest leaves and souchong from the fourth leaves. After picking, the leaves are either dried immediately and completely to produce green teas or partially dried and then allowed to ferment and to produce various kinds of black teas such as orange pekoe, pekoe, congou, and souchong. Oolong tea is partially fired and then steamed, having characteristics between green and black teas. Some teas are allowed to absorb the scent from flowers or seasonings, creating fragrances such as jasmine.

Herbal "teas" contain no true tea leaves, but are created from a collection of herbs and spices such as rosebuds, mint, hibiscus, cinnamon, red bush, yerba mate and more. These botanical ingredients are sometimes combined to create a variety of flavors and aromas.

The Fascinating History of Tea

It all began in China, Some Think

Tea is nearly 5,000 years old and was discovered, as legend has it, in 2737 BC by a Chinese emperor when some tea leaves accidentally blew into a pot of boiling water. Tea soon became an important drink in all of China, not just for the royal household. A Buddhist priest then introduced tea to imperial Japan where its popularity spread. The elaborate Japanese tea ceremony developed as a religious and art form in Japanese society.

Leader, do not read this history to your group. Summarize the parts you find interesting. Some of these stories are very intriguing. If you wish, just review the history as given in the participants handout.

The Road to Europe—Via Ship

Europe was introduced to tea through a Portuguese Jesuit priest who visited China. Portugal gained the first right of trade with China and developed a trade route by which they shipped their tea to Lisbon. Dutch ships then transported it to France, Holland, and the Baltic countries. Tea became very fashionable in the Dutch capital, The Hague. The high cost of the tea (over \$100 per pound) made it the domain of the wealthy. As the amount of tea imported increased, the prices fell and sales expanded. Initially tea was available to the public in apothecaries along with such rare and new spices as ginger and sugar, by 1675 it was available in common food shops throughout Holland.

As the craze for things oriental swept Europe, tea became part of the way of life. Dutch inns provided the first restaurant service of tea. Tea remained popular in France for only about fifty years, being replaced by a stronger preference for wine, chocolate, and exotic coffees.

Great Britain was the last of the three great sea-faring nations to break into the Chinese and East Indian trade routes. The first samples of tea reached England between 1652 and 1654. Tea quickly proved popular enough to replace ale as the national drink of England. Queen Elizabeth I established the John Company to promote Asian trade. Its powers were almost without limit; it was the single largest, most powerful monopoly to ever exist in the world. And its power was based on the importation of tea. England introduced the commercial growing of tea in India. Through a merger with the East Indian Company, a complete and total trade monopoly on all commerce in China and India developed.

About the same time the East Indian Company was in power, Imperial Russia was attempting to engage China and Japan in trade. Russian interest in tea began as early as 1618. Caravans brought tea into Russia from China. Russia developed its own traditions with tea, using the samovar from the Tibetan "hot pot".

Tea in England

Tea mania swept across England as it had earlier spread throughout France and Holland. Tea was drunk by all levels of society, however, tea at the tea gardens were for the nobility, not the working class.

Prior to the introduction of tea into Britain, the English had two main meals-breakfast and dinner. Breakfast was ale, bread and beef. Dinner was a long, massive meal at the end of the day. Anna, the Duchess of Bedford (1788-1861) often experienced a "sinking feeling" in the late afternoon. Adopting the European tea service format, she invited friends to join her for an additional afternoon meal at five o'clock in her rooms at Belvoir Castle. The menu centered around small cakes, bread and butter sandwiches, assorted sweets, and, of course, tea. The practice of inviting friends to come for tea in the afternoon was quickly picked up by other social hostesses. The English traditions of serving low tea or afternoon tea became very popular for the upper class.

High tea was served around 6:00 pm and in reality was a hearty evening meal. It started as a working man's supper with strong tea served with meat, bread and butter, pastry, custard and cakes.

Another tea tradition of interest was the Tea Dance that began in 1816 and continued until after World War II. Friends and acquaintances would meet between 5:00 and 6:30 to drink tea and dance. This became popular with the new "working girl" in the city—a great way to meet men.

... and in America

When the Dutch were actively involved in trade throughout the Western world, Peter Stuyvesant brought the first tea to America to the colonists in the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam (New York). Settlers became confirmed tea drinkers. When England acquired the colony, they found that the small settlement consumed more tea at that time than all of England put together.

Though the early Dutch colonists were heavy tea drinkers, it wasn't until about 1720 that tea became popular with the English colonists. It became a special favorite of colonial women. Tea however, was very heavily taxed and contraband tea was smuggled in by the independent American merchants. Herbal teas were adopted from the Indians. As new and heavier taxes were put on the colonists, they rebelled and purchased mostly Dutch tea. England tried to force American women to purchase and drink only English tea, which resulted in women boycotting English tea until their rights were restored. It is interesting that the American Revolution soon followed and the Boston Tea Party led the way.

America entered into the tea trade soon after the Revolutionary War. America's newer, faster clipper ships out sailed English "tea wagons". The American merchants were able to break the English tea monopoly because of faster ships and they could additionally pay in gold rather than opium.

The two major American contributions to the tea industry occurred early in the 20th century. In 1904, iced tea was popularized at the World's Fair in St. Louis. Iced tea was created because the hot tea was not selling during the hot weather, so the promoters put ice in the tea, to the enjoyment of all. Cold tea was previously consumed with alcohol added and called "tea punch." In 1908, Thomas Sullivan of New York developed the concept of tea in a bag; a way to take tea samples to merchants that soon became popular to the consumer. (For more information on the history of tea, go to: www.stashtea.com.)

Types of Tea

Ask participants to name their favorite kind of tea. Is it hot, herbal, iced, with lemon, with milk, with sugar or without, etc?

(Using the participant's handout, review the types of tea that are available today: Black, Oolong, Green, White, Flavored, Herbals). Show some samples.)

Tea Grades and Classification

Tea leaves vary in size and are sorted by the size of the leaf. The grade designates leaf size only, not quality. Grades are leaf (Orange Pekoe are whole leaves classified by size), broken (Broken Orange Pekoe), fannings and dust (used in tea bags).

Tea leaves are also classified from where on the tea plant they were plucked, and also what time of year the harvest took place. A "fine picking" is comprised of the top "two leaves and a bud" of the tea plant. The "bud" is the immature leaf tip. Early in the growing season the young tips have a golden color. Teas produced at this time are referred to as Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe-GFOP. When the number of golden tips is relatively high, the designation of TGFOP is used, indicating Tippy GFOP. Indian teas are occasionally designated FTGFOP1 for Finest TGFOP, grade 1 and SFTGFOP1 for Super-Fine TGFOP, grade 1 or "I" for Imperial grade.

Varieties of Tea

(Look at the many varieties of tea available in the catalogs you have obtained. Note that they are often defined by the country of origin, the growing area, and even the specific estate they were grown on. Also look at the notes that follow the tea description, giving color of the tea, flavor and sometimes other serving suggestions. The participant handout has some listing of the more popular ones available.)

How to Make a Perfect Cup of Tea

Refer to the participant handout for this information. Make a pot of tea and show the various types of infusers and other tea accessories (such as bags, ball filters, tea cozies, warming pots, etc.).

What's Wrong with My Tea?

If your tea does not taste right, there can be several reasons. Try it again with new water and new tea.

- Harsh and bitter, funny "mouth feel"? – Ignore the "one for the pot", brewed too long, too much tea.
- Looks cloudy? – Poor quality of tea, poor water quality.
- Tastes metallic? – Quality of water, quality of tea.
- Looks scummy? – Usually water quality, poor quality small-leaf tea.
- Tastes dull and flat? – Poor quality tea, water was reboiled, did not use the water while it was still boiling (important for black tea).
- Tea is tasteless? – Tea stored too long (buy in small quantities).

How to Store Tea

Refer to the participant handout. Show some tins or containers that would hold tea—you may be able to find some at a second hand shop or around the house.

Taking Time for Tea

The drinking of tea as well as herbal “tea” or infusions has taken on different rituals in many countries throughout the world. *(Review the traditions as shared in the participant handout. If you have someone that knows about any of these traditions or has experienced drinking tea in another country, ask them to share their experience.)*

The Tea Table at Any Time

So you want to have a few friends over for tea, or you want to have a fun tea party for your granddaughter’s friends, just get started. For helpful hints, look in the library for party books, check out your local tea shop or go to the internet.

All you need to serve tea is a teapot, a few cups, some good tea, pastries, a pretty table and a friend to share it with. Linens can be simple or elegant, just be sure they are clean. Food to accompany the tea can be muffins, scones, sweet breads, toast, sandwiches, and more. Condiments can include jams, jellies, and butter. Tea is just fine by itself, before meals, after meals. Some people drink a cup of tea before dinner to help them slow down, relax and enjoy dinner without overeating.

Tea can be served any time in America, though many enjoy serving it in the British tradition. *(See Britain: Taking Time for Tea, Participants handout)* Who doesn’t want an occasional party? You may also want to treat yourself and your friends to an outing at a tea parlor—let someone else do all the work.

Health Benefits of Tea

Tea is not only a refreshing beverage, but may have some health promoting benefits as well. In Asian cultures, people have long believed that tea has medicinal power. Scientific research has only recently begun to confirm this. Research has indicated that all tea is good for you, not just green tea, as long as it comes from the leaf of *Camellia sinensis*.

Chemicals that make tea a potential health protector are called polyphenols. Green tea was thought to have the most of these chemicals; however it has been found that black tea has similar amounts.

The polyphenols have antioxidant activity—that is, they help deactivate cell-damaging free radicals. According to a test conducted for *Consumer Reports*, teas with the most antioxidant power are brewed from loose leaves or tea bags. Next come instant teas, and then bottled. Bottled teas are usually highly diluted: lots of water and sugar, and not much tea. Steeping tea for three to five minutes releases the highest level of antioxidants (UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, March 2000).

The caffeine content of tea also varies, depending on how much you use and how long you steep it. Green, black, and red (oolong) teas contain about 40 milligrams per cup, on the average, which is less than half the amount in a cup of brewed coffee (UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, March 2000).

Researchers have studied potential links between tea and health:

Heart attacks: There is some evidence that tea drinking (perhaps 3 cups of black tea per day) may be associated with a modest decrease in risk of heart attacks.

Cancer: Although studies have suggested that green and black tea may have a cancer-preventive role in animals, it’s not clear whether tea will help to prevent cancer in humans.

Bone density: Tea consumption has been positively associated with bone density in some studies, but whether it reduces the risk of fractures due to osteoporosis isn’t clear.

Dental health: Fluoride levels in green, oolong and black teas are generally comparable to those recommended for the prevention of dental cavities. Limited research suggests that tea consumption may be associated with fewer cavities, but more research is needed to confirm this.

Skin health: Though tea is now turning up in bath gels and other beauty products, it's doubtful that applying tea to the skin does any good.

It's unknown whether decaffeinated teas have the same polyphenols, and thus the same potential health benefits, as regular teas. Herbal teas don't have the same health benefits.

Although herbal teas may not have the combination of health-promoting chemicals in plain old tea, many people and cultures claim health benefits in using yerba mate, rooibos, and many other herbs. You may see drinks made from herbs called "herb infusions" or "tisane." Some common herbs that are used are peppermint, chamomile, rose hips, lemon verbena, licorice, and fennel. Some herbs can cause problems; chamomile, for example, can cause allergic reactions in people who are allergic to ragweed.

The March 2000 issue of the *UC Berkeley Wellness Letter* suggests thinking of tea as a backup to a healthy diet and an adjunct to regular exercise and other good health habits—not a miraculous potion that will keep you well by itself.

More and more research results are being reported that give a positive spin to drinking tea...**so enjoy your tea!**

Leader: *Make tea for your group, serve with a simple snack. (See Lesson Preparation)*

Evaluation: *Please take time to complete the evaluation. Distribute the "Informed Consent Statement" and evaluation form. Read aloud the "Informed Consent Statement" and give participants 5 minutes or so to complete the evaluation. Collect the evaluation and return them to your local county Extension Office.*

Prepared by: Janice Gregg, OSU Extension Faculty, Family and Community Development, Linn and Benton Counties
 Edited by: Dr. Carolyn Raab, OSU Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist



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Time for Tea!

Participant Handout

Why drink tea? Because you enjoy it! A medical book attributed to the second or third century said that tea not only quenches thirst and lessens the desire for sleep, but it gladdens and cheers the heart. Brewing "tea" has been a social event as well as a restful break for people for thousands of years, adjusting to the varied customs and tastes of that culture. Recent research has affirmed that tea is good for you and can help keep you healthy.

Tea is one of the oldest and newest fad drinks today... chai tea, herb tea, fruit drinks with tea, green tea, white tea, black teas and more (the newest fad - bubble tea). Tea was first consumed in China and India and is now consumed by more than half the world's population. Tea is an aromatic stimulant, containing various polyphenols, essential oils, and caffeine.



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History

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Europe was introduced to tea through a Portuguese Jesuit priest who visited China. Portugal and then the Dutch began to import tea to Europe. It began as a drink of the most wealthy, but as more tea was imported, the common person began to enjoy tea. The popularity of tea did not last long in France (50 years) as they had a stronger preference for wine, chocolate, and exotic coffees. Once introduced to England, tea quickly replaced ale as the national drink.

Trade in Asia, specifically with China and India, soon became monopolized by England and it was based on the importation of tea. In the society of England elaborate service emerged to serve tea. In clubs, in gardens and in homes, tea was the beverage that prompted good conversation and friendships.

About the same time Imperial Russia gained interest in tea. Russia developed its own traditions with tea, using the samovar from the Tibetan "hot pot". Russians favor tea that is highly sweetened. Tea (along with vodka) is the national drink of Russia.

In America the early Dutch colonists were heavy drinkers of tea. Later it became popular with the English colonists. It soon became a favorite with the colonial women. Tea however, was very heavily taxed and contraband tea was smuggled in by the independent American merchants. Herbal teas were adopted from the Indians. As new and heavier taxes were put on the colonists, they rebelled and purchased mostly Dutch tea. England tried to force American women to purchase and drink only English tea, which resulted in women boycotting English tea until their rights were restored. The American Revolution soon followed with the Boston Tea Party leading the way.

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Types of Tea

- ◆ **Black Tea** – The harvested leaves are spread out to wither. Next the leaves are rolled, which liberates the aromatic juices and starts a chemical change through the absorption of oxygen. This oxidation process, which occurs only in high humidity and warm temperatures, turns the leaves a bright copper color and gives them subtle flavors. After a few hours, the leaves are dried with hot fans to end the oxidation.
- ◆ **Scented Black Tea** – Oxidized tea leaves are set on screens to be scented or smoked. Fans are used to spray the leaves with scented fragrances or oils, such as the citrus bergamot that produces an aromatic Earl Grey tea. Fans can also run smoke over the leaves, which result in smoky teas like Lapsang Souchong.
- ◆ **Oolong Tea** – The process is similar to black tea, but the withering and oxidizing times are cut down. The oxidation is stopped before completion. This results in a fragrant tea that evokes both black and green tea qualities. Some consider these teas the best teas of all.
- ◆ **Green Tea** – Tea leaves are harvested and immediately put into a large steamer and heated. This softens the leaves for rolling and keeps the juices from oxidizing. The leaves are then rolled or twisted and dried again and again until crisp. They remain green in color.
- ◆ **White Tea** – Only the tender buds of the tea plant are picked; they are not rolled or fermented, just carefully dried. Fine downy white hairs remain on the silver-colored slivers, which have a fragrance reminiscent of a delicate orchid.
- ◆ **Yellow Tea** – An uncommon type of tea lightly oxidized and has a light smoky or roasted flavor.
- ◆ **Art Teas** – Hand produced only in China and beautiful to look at, the teas buds are strung together, sometimes with added flowers and sometimes scented. These art teas are brewed in a glass cup or teapot so they can be admired as they "bloom".

Varieties of Tea (these are just some of the more popular varieties available)



Black Teas:

- ♦ **Ceylon (Sri Lanka):** aromatic, rich, flowery, somewhat sweet, very delicate, amber color. Good with a little cold milk and goes well with sweet bread. Typical "Lipton tea" flavor.
- ♦ **Keemun (China):** subtle orchid aroma, red color. Mild with hint of sweetness, it is a good evening tea.
- ♦ **Lapsang Souchong (China):** leaves are withered over open fires of pine. It is an assertive dark tea red-brown in color with smoky fragrance and flavor. This distinctive tea is good with salty and spicy dishes and with cheese.
- ♦ **Yunnan (China):** unique in its subtle rich taste. It is red-amber in color and is full-bodied with a light floral scent, great as a breakfast tea.
- ♦ **Assam (India):** bold with strong malty taste and dark color. It is a rich, round flavor and goes nicely with milk as a morning tea.
- ♦ **Darjeeling (India):** most prestigious of black teas, it has distinctive taste depending on the season harvested. "First Flush" or springtime tea, has a light aroma, delicate flavor and flowery taste—a connoisseur's delight. "Second Flush" or summer tea" produces a darker, for full-bodied cup, great for the afternoon.
- ♦ **Nilgiri (southern India):** Mild, fresh full-bodied. Good with sweet foods and milk.

Green Teas:

- ♦ **Dragon's Well (Long-Jing) (China):** Subtle, chestnut flavor; lingering aftertaste.
- ♦ **Brown rice tea (Gen-mai Cha) (Japan):** Nutty, toasty flavor due to roasted puffed rice and popcorn included in tea. This tea is traditionally used as a ceremonial tea in Japan.
- ♦ **Gunpowder (Pearl Tea) (China):** Pungent, astringent, may be somewhat nutty or smoky.
- ♦ **Gyokuro (Jewel Dew) (Japan):** Mild fresh, delicate flavor with natural sweetness. May be infused multiple times. Finest Japanese tea uses only shade-grown tips.
- ♦ **Mao Feng (China):** Mellow, slightly sweet.
- ♦ **Matcha (powdered green tea) (Japan):** bitter, in Japan used in the tea ceremony. It is often used in recipes or porridge to get the health benefits from the tea.
- ♦ **Pi Lo Chun (China):** Very fragrant, smells of peach, plum, and apricot.

Oolong Teas:

- ♦ **Formosa (Silvertip) (Taiwan):** Floral, delicate. Considered "the champagne of teas."
- ♦ **Pu-ehr (China):** Earthy, used at mealtimes, Chinese believe this tea aids digestion. Goes through a double oxidation process. Often considered a black tea.
- ♦ **Ti Kuan Yin (Taiwan or China):** Rich, floral.
- ♦ **Wu Lung (China):** Flowery, flavorful, and delicate.

White Teas:

- ♦ **Flowery Pekoe**
- ♦ **White Peony**
- ♦ **Silver Needles**
- ♦ **Yunnan Snow tea**



Tea Blends

- ♦ **Chai (Indian Spice tea):** Blends black tea with ginger, cardamom, cloves and white peppercorns, spicy rich warm flavor. Add milk and drink with meals.
- ♦ **Earl Grey:** Black tea blend with citrus flavor from oil of bergamot.
- ♦ **English Breakfast:** Black tea blend, strong, may be malty, has flowery aroma.
- ♦ **Irish Breakfast:** Black tea blend, source mostly Assam, smooth, hearty, slightly lemony.
- ♦ **Orange Spice:** Black tea, source varies, rich citrus overtones, great for iced tea.
- ♦ **Russian Caravan:** Blend of Chinese and Indian, usually, hearty, full flavored, slightly smoky.
- ♦ **Mélange du Chamonix:** Fine Indian tea blended with cocoa, cardamom, and hint of mint to produce a balanced and warming cup—a delicate treat for any chocolate lover.

Scented Green Tea

- ♦ **Jasmine:** Delicate, floral
- ♦ **Lychee:** Delicate grapefruity, good chilled.
- ♦ **Moroccan Green Mint:** Gunpowder green tea blended with a generous amount of Moroccan spearmint.

To make a perfect cup of tea:

- For a good cup of tea, good quality water and correct brewing time are essential.
- Start with a preheated pot or cup (fill with very hot water and let it stand for a while).
- Use fresh cold water. In areas with poor tap water, use bottled or filtered water. Never use water from the hot water tap. Let the tap water run for a few seconds until it is quite cold; this ensures that the water is aerated (full of oxygen) to release the full flavor of the tea leaves.
- Bring water to a rolling boil. Don't let it boil too long, as it will boil away the flavor releasing oxygen and result in a flat tasting cup of tea. Pour boiling water on tea leaves or tea bag. If making a green, oolong or white tea, do not boil the water; the leaves should be infused around 185 degrees F. or they will extract bitterness.
- Brew 3 to 5 minutes (steep green teas for one to three minutes).
- Remove tea bag or infuser. Cover pot with cozy to keep tea warm. Enjoy.
- Add sugar or milk (cream is too heavy) as you desire. Some tea drinkers say the tea is better if the milk is heated and tea is made strong. Whether you add sugar or milk will often depend upon the kind of tea you brew.

Using loose tea:

To make an 8-ounce cup of tea, follow these guidelines. Adjust to suit your taste.

White tea—2 teaspoons

Green tea—1 teaspoon

Oolong tea—2 teaspoons

Black tea—1 teaspoon

Herbal tea—start with 1 teaspoon and increase to desired taste

When using a tea infuser be sure to fill it only ½ full so the tea leaves have enough room to infuse (expand) properly.

How to Store Tea

Store tea in a dark, airtight container that has no risk of gathering moisture. Keep it well away from spices and strong-smelling food, as tea will quickly absorb flavors. Black tea can last up to two years in a vacuum packed or sealed container. Delicate black or green teas will last only six months on the shelf.

Taking Time for Tea

Tea drinking has developed rituals over time and within various cultures. It has always been associated with good food and conversation. It can be enjoyed in solitary, but the traditions of tea drinking often are associated with a social or shared event.

- **China:** tea is served to all guests who come to pay a visit. It is a very important social activity. If tea is not served, the guest is humiliated. It is used for casual as well as serious occasions. Younger generations greet elder generations with a cup of tea... a way to show respect. If an apology is necessary, words are not enough, the Chinese, "pour tea and apologize." It is an act of regretfulness and submissiveness. Chinese have specific methods of making tea which is served in tiny cups (gongfu method). The fragrance of the teas is appreciated by pouring tea into cups, pouring it out and smelling the fragrance before pouring the tea again and tasting. When Chinese thank another for a cup of tea, they knock their fingers or knuckles on the table. (chineseteas101.com/custom.htm)
- **Japan:** the Japanese Tea Ceremony originated in China, but it became a very important part of Japanese culture and religion. The ceremony can last as long as 4 hours and is presided over by a Tea Master. Powdered tea. The green teas are popular in Japan and every traditional meal ends with a cup of tea to aid digestion. Any moment of relaxation and any welcome involve a cup of green tea.
- **Britain:** Traditionally, tea is usually served from 3:00 and 6:00 in the afternoon. The general rule is that the earlier the tea is served, the lighter the refreshments. Late afternoon teas ("high teas") can have a meat dish, rolls, salads and dessert and are served in the dining room. Earlier teas are served in the living room from a tray or cart. Tea is still served at Buckingham Palace-- at garden parties, cricket matches and a variety of occasions.
- **Egypt:** served in a glass on a metal tray with a glass of water and sugar. All of the countries in North Africa drink tea. It is prepared with top-quality green teas and gets its special flavor from mint. It is made with lots of sugar. Sometimes perfumed water is added (orange flower, rose water, or herbs).
- **Arab countries:** offer of tea is first sign of friendship, intensely sweet pastries are served.
- **Russia:** very strong boiled tea that is diluted in the cup by adding boiling water. The samovar is an important part of brewing tea. It is a combination of bubbling hot water heater and tea pot. Tea is served to women using cups and to men using a glass inserted into a handled holder. It is served with lumps of sugar or spoonful of jam. Try Russian Caravan tea with a spoonful of marmalade. Tea (along with vodka) is the national drink of Russia.
- In **Tibet**, tea is made with butter, soda, salt, boiling water and tea. In Kirghizistan, it is prepared with milk, flour, butter and salt. In Nepal, it is prepared with salt and yak butter and like it very hot and sweet.
- **France:** tea served in unhurried fashion with delicate pastries.
- **Temperance meetings:** tea and sympathy was the fare.
- **Southern Africa:** Several native herbs, Rooibos (roy boss) or red bush and Honey bush tea (a shrubby legume) are enjoyed as a healthful drink. It is served hot or iced. Mild flavored, these do not contain caffeine.
- **Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay, and southern Brazil:** a tea-like beverage called Yerba Mate (YURbah maTAY) is very popular and has been for centuries. It is traditionally drunk from a gourd through a "bombilla" (a decorative straw and filter). It is made either hot or cold. In traditional Mate use, the cup is often shared among close friends and family, using the same bombilla. It is served to the most honored first (usually the oldest) who sips all of the cup, which is refilled and passed to the next drinker, and so on until all have had some. South Americans enjoy this drink socially as a sign of acceptance and friendship.



The Tea Table at Any Time

All you need to serve tea is a teapot, a few cups, some good tea, pastries, a pretty table and a friend to share it with. Linens can be simple or elegant, just be sure they are clean. Food to accompany the tea can be muffins, scones, sweet breads, toast, sandwiches, and more. Condiments can include jams, jellies, and butter. Tea is just fine by itself, before meals, after meals. Some people drink a cup of tea before dinner to help them slow down, relax and enjoy dinner without overeating.

Enjoy a tea party with grandchildren and their friends. Let them dress up in fancy clothes with hats, gloves and frilly skirts. (Goodwill, yard and rummage sales are great sources.) You will have as much fun as they do!

Tea can be served any time in America. Some people enjoy serving tea in the British tradition for something special. (See Britain above—"Taking Time for Tea") Who doesn't want an occasional party? You may also want to treat yourself and your friends to an outing at a tea parlor—let someone else do all the work.

Health Benefits of Tea

Tea is not only a refreshing beverage, but may have some health promoting benefits as well. Research has indicated that all tea is good for you, not just green tea, as long as it comes from the leaf of *Camellia sinensis*.

Researchers have studied potential links between tea and health:

Heart attacks: There is some evidence that tea drinking (perhaps 3 cups of black tea per day) may be associated with a modest decrease in risk of heart attacks. It's too soon to say that tea will prevent heart attacks, however.

Cancer: Although studies have suggested that green and black tea may have a cancer-preventive role in animals, it's not clear whether tea will help to prevent cancer in humans.

Bone density: Tea consumption has been positively associated with bone density in some studies, but whether it reduces the risk of fractures due to osteoporosis isn't clear.

Dental health: Fluoride levels in green, oolong and black teas are generally comparable to those recommended for the prevention of dental cavities. Limited research suggests that tea consumption may be associated with fewer cavities, but more research is needed to confirm this.

Skin health: Though tea is now turning up in bath gels and other beauty products, it's doubtful that applying tea to the skin does any good.

It's unknown whether decaffeinated teas have the same potential health benefits as regular teas. Herbal teas don't have the same health benefits, however many people and cultures claim health benefits in using yerba mate, rooibos, and many other herbs. Some herbs can cause problems, however. For example, chamomile can cause allergic reactions in people who are allergic to ragweed.

The March 2000 issue of the *UC Berkeley Wellness Letter* suggests thinking of tea as a backup to a healthy diet and an adjunct to regular exercise and other good health habits—not a miraculous potion that will keep you well by itself.

More and more research results are being reported that give a positive spin to drinking tea...so enjoy your tea!

Recipes:

Iced tea from tea concentrates:

For each tea concentrate, steep 12 tea bags in 4 cups boiling water. Squeeze tea bags to retain all of the liquid. Cool concentrate in the refrigerator at least 3 hours up to two weeks. Here are two recipes that use tea concentrates:

Green Tea Ginger Sparkler (4 servings)

- 1 1/3 cups tea concentrate made from Green Tea
- 1/4 cup finely chopped crystallized ginger
- 2 2/3 cups chilled ginger ale
- ice cubes

Combine ginger and tea concentrate while still hot and refrigerate for at least three hours. Strain and discard ginger. Pour concentrate and ginger ale into ice filled glasses.

Apricot Tea Sparkler (4 servings)

- 1 1/3 cups tea concentrate (made from Irish Breakfast tea)
- 1 1/3 cups apricot nectar
- 1 1/3 cup sparkling water
- ice cubes

Combine concentrate, apricot nectar and sparkling water. Pour into ice filled glasses.

Hot Teas:

Chai Blend

- 8 English or Irish Breakfast tea bags
- 8 whole cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/2 pint half and half or condensed milk
- Honey or sugar as sweetener

Prepare a strong tea using 8 teabags in 4 cups boiling water. Steep tea for 5 minutes. Remove tea bags. Add cloves, cardamom and ginger and simmer for 10 minutes. Add half and half or milk and sweeten to taste.

For recipes using tea or herbal teas, check the Internet at these sites:

<http://www.teausa.com> (good information; try the tea test and look at the newsletter articles in "Top line on tea" for current research on tea and interesting facts about tea)

<http://www.liptont.com/mixwell/index.shtml>

<http://www.nestea.com/>

<http://www.estatetea.com/recipes.htm>

<http://www.stashtea.com/recipes.htm> (100 recipes using tea or herbal teas)

<http://www.uptontea.com> (tea and accessories... see the classification and types of teas available... amazing!)

<http://www.noborders.net/mate/> (for information on yerba mate)

Reference: Book of Tea, Annie Perrier-Robert, 2004

Low Calorie Tea Goodies

Tomato Treat

Spread a thin layer of reduced-fat mayonnaise on ¼ slice whole wheat bread. Top with a slice of tomato, chopped fresh basil and a pinch of cumin.

Egg on Rye

Spread Dijon mustard on ¼ piece of rye toast. Top with a few capers or pickle slice and a thin slice of hard-boiled egg (1/4 inch thick).

Mango Delight

Top a whole grain cracker with a small piece of fresh or canned mango, chopped fresh cilantro, and a thin slice of reduced-fat cheddar cheese.

Honey Muffin

Drizzle 1 tsp of honey onto a cinnamon-raisin English muffin.

Strawberries and Cream

Spread 1 tsp reduced-fat cream cheese on ½ graham cracker. Top with 1 tsp strawberry jam.
(adapted from Family Circle, 10/8/02, pg 104)

Written by: Janice Gregg, OSU Extension Faculty, Family and Community Development, Linn and Benton Counties
Edited by: Dr. Carolyn Raab, OSU Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist



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Growing Tea at Home

You might be surprised at how easy it is.

I'm not talking about herbal teas either, but real tea: *Camellia sinensis*. You don't need a large garden to grow your own tea, a planter on a balcony would work just fine.

The tea shrub is hardy to Zone 8 (The country is broken up into 'zones' with similar temperature and weather patterns. Zone 8 is mid-west to southern USA). If you don't live in these areas, don't fret. You could try growing *Camellia sinensis* in a greenhouse, or in a pot that you can bring indoors during cold winters.

The *Camellia sinensis* plant is a small shrub about 1-2 meters in height, though it will grow taller if you don't prune it. In the fall, your tea shrub will flower with small white blossoms that have a delightful scent. These plants are often grown as ornamentals. For planting, *Camellia sinensis* likes well-drained and sandy soil that is on the acidic side. If you are going to grow your tea in a container, add some sphagnum moss to the potting mix. You'll need some patience, too. Your plant should be around 3 years old before you start harvesting leaves.

You might be able to get seeds at your local nursery, or try online at Seedrack.com.

Growing tea is only half the battle. Once your tea plant is growing well, you'll need to harvest and process your tea leaves. From your plant, you can make black, green or oolong tea.

Green Tea

- Pluck the very youngest leaves and leaf buds.
- Blot the leaves dry, and let dry in the shade for a few hours.
- Steam the leaves (like you would vegetables) on your stove for about a minute.
- For a different flavour, try roasting them in a skillet for 2 minutes instead of steaming.
- Spread the leaves on a baking sheet and dry in the oven at 250F for 20 minutes.
- Store the dried tea leaves in an air-tight container

Oolong Tea

- Pluck the very youngest leaves and leaf buds.
- Spread them out on a towel under the sun and let them wilt for about 45 minutes.
- Bring your leaves inside and let them sit at room temperature for a few hours.
- Make sure to stir the leaves up every hour.
- The edges of the leaves will start to turn red as they begin to dry.
- Spread the leaves on a baking sheet and dry in the oven at 250F for 20 minutes.
- Store the dried tea leaves in an air-tight container.

Black Tea

- Pluck the very youngest leaves and leaf buds.
- Roll the leaves between your hands, and crush them until the leaves start to darken and turn red.
- Spread them out on a tray, and leave them in a cool location for 2-3 days.
- Dry them in the oven at 250F for about 20 minutes.
- Store in an air-tight container.

Once you get the hang of it, try experimenting with different drying times to get different tastes. Mix your teas with jasmine or hibiscus flowers for a lovely summer tea right from your garden.