

Tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world, other than water. Its history spans over 5,000 years and was popular even before the Egyptians built the great pyramids. Since ancient times, tea has been revered for its bountiful health benefits and therapeutic properties. Today, over 6 billion pounds of tea are harvested annually, and the best loose-leaf teas are comparable to fine wine.

As gourmet tea becomes more popular, consumers are thirsty to learn about the history and tradition behind this glorious beverage. Similar to fine wine, there is a wealth of information to learn and explore.

We offer "Your Guide to Tea" to provide an overview into the world of gourmet tea. For even more information, please visit www.OctaviaTea.com.

TYPES OF TEA

TRUE TEA

All "true" tea comes from the same plant, called the *Camellia sinensis*. Any leaf, root, fruit or flower that comes from a different plant is considered an herbal tea. For example, chamomile flowers and peppermint leaves are considered herbal teas because they do not come from the traditional tea plant. It is important to distinguish between real tea and herbal tea since the flavor, health benefits and nutritional characteristics vary from plant to plant.

THOUSANDS OF TEAS, DIVIDED INTO 4 CATEGORIES

There are thousands of different kinds of teas, each with their own individual appearance, taste and aroma. To make sense of all the variations, "true teas" (those made from the tea plant, or *Camellia sinensis*, versus herbal teas which come from other plants) can be categorized into 4 major categories: white, green, oolong and black. Generally, these categories refer to how much a tea is oxidized.

OXIDATION DETERMINES CATEGORY AND FLAVOR

Oxidation (also called fermentation) is a natural process that changes the color and flavor of the leaf. To initiate oxidation, fresh tealeaves are rolled (either by hand or machine) in order to crack the surface of the leaf so that oxygen will react with the plant's enzymes.

Black tea is fully oxidized, oolong tea is partially oxidized and green and white teas are unoxidized. Generally speaking, the less a tea is oxidized, the lighter it will be in both taste and aroma. Heavily oxidized teas will yield a dark, rich, reddish-brown infusion while less oxidized teas will yield a light, yellow-green liquor.

By selectively exposing the tealeaves to oxygen, tea producers can bring out certain flavors and aromas. In other words, the oxidation process will determine many of the tea's flavor characteristics as well as whether the tea will be categorized as white, green, oolong or black.



WHITE	GREEN	OOLONG	BLACK
<i>unoxidized</i>			<i>fully oxidized</i>

Generally speaking, the less a tea is oxidized, the lighter it will be in both taste and aroma. Heavily oxidized teas will yield a dark, rich, reddish-brown infusion while less oxidized teas will yield a light, yellow-green liquor.

*All true tea comes from the same plant, called the *Camellia sinensis*. Whether the tea becomes white, green, oolong or black, depends on how the leaves are processed and oxidized.*

WHITE TEA

Harvested by hand only a few days each spring, white tea is made from baby tea leaves and is the rarest and least processed of all tea varietals. Because it undergoes virtually no processing and is made from the tender, nutrient-rich bud from the tip of the plant, white tea is considered the healthiest of all teas.

THE HEALTHIEST TEA

White teas were rated one of the hottest products on the US tea market and show no signs of slowing down due to the continued media attention highlighting their anti-cancer potential.

White tea is considered to be the healthiest of all types of tea because it has the highest levels of antioxidants and theanine, a rare amino acid found only in high-quality tea. Antioxidants are believed to maintain health, combat aging and prevent disease. Theanine promotes mental and physical relaxation, improves mood, reduces anxiety, boosts the immune system and increases concentration. White tea also has the lowest caffeine content of all true teas.



Due to its unique processing and season of harvest, white tea is reported to have the highest antioxidant content (even higher than green tea!) and lowest caffeine level of all true teas. White tea also contains stress-relieving, mood-lifting properties.

SILVER-WHITE APPEARANCE

Because white tea undergoes very little processing, the tealeaves retain their natural appearance. For instance, White Peony, one of the most popular styles of authentic white tea and the base for our white tea blends, is multi-colored like autumn leaves and covered with a silver-white down that resembles the skin of a ripened peach. Silver Needle, the highest grade of white tea, consists of only silvery-white sprouts.

GENTLE, MELLOW, NECTAR-LIKE FLAVOR

White tea brews a pale, golden color and has a gentle, subtly sweet, mellow, nectar-like flavor with unique floral, wood and honey notes. We often recommend white tea to customers who want lots of health benefits but are hesitant about green tea's strong flavors. With no bitterness and a delicate, smooth flavor that blends wonderfully with other ingredients, white tea is an ideal choice for someone new to the world-of-tea. Its rare quality and amazing complexity also makes white tea attractive to the seasoned connoisseur.

At Octavia Tea, we consider white teas one of our specialties. Our garden-direct relationships enable us to offer exquisite white teas for some of the best prices in the industry.



Silver Needle



White Peony

Silver Needle, the highest grade of white tea, consists of only silvery-white sprouts.

White Peony, a classic white tea used in many of our blends, is multi-colored like autumn leaves and covered with a silver-white down that resembles the skin of a ripened peach.

GREEN TEA

Green tea is one of the fastest-growing segments in the US specialty tea market due to continued media attention surrounding its abundant health benefits. Green tea is rich in EGCG (Epigallocatechin gallate; one of nature's most potent antioxidants) and is gaining widespread popularity due to its natural ability to promote weight-loss and good health.

MINIMAL PROCESSING

As a result of minimal processing, green tea retains its natural appearance and vibrant color as well as high levels of the plant's healthy properties. Green tea varies dramatically in flavor from grassy and sweet, to floral and fresh, to nutty and roasted. Like fine wine, green tea's flavor depends on the plant varietal, season of harvest, soil, elevation, weather, cultivation and origin. Each region has its own distinct flavor and aroma.

VARIETIES DRAMATICALLY IN FLAVOR

Green tea comes from leaves that are withered until the leaf becomes flaccid and then immediately steamed or fired to halt the active leaf enzymes that would otherwise react with oxygen. In China, this is generally done by roasting or pan-firing the leaves while, in Japan, this is usually accomplished by steaming the leaves at a high temperature. During firing or steaming, the leaf is continuously rolled to and fro, creating the unique shape of the leaf (flat and needle-like, wiry and twisted, or pearl shaped). The Chinese style of processing tends to bring out a smooth, aromatic flavor while the steaming process yields a deep vegetal or herbaceous quality--a characteristic prized in Japanese teas.

At Octavia Tea, we continually sample hundreds of different green teas and choose only the best selection from the world's top artisan tea gardens. Our green tea blends are hand crafted in small batches and infused with only pure essential oils, natural essences and fresh botanicals.

BREWING GREEN TEA

Green tea tends to be the most difficult category to brew correctly and can easily go bitter. The brewing instructions (listed under the "Brewing Tips" section) will help you achieve the best flavor.

Green tea retains high levels of the plant's natural, healthy properties and is lighter in color and milder in flavor than black tea.



Green tea is rich in EGCG (Epigallocatechin gallate; one of nature's most potent antioxidants) and is gaining widespread popularity due to its natural ability to promote weight-loss and good health.

OOLONG TEA

A FAVORITE AMONG CONNOISSEURS

A favorite among connoisseurs, oolong teas (often pronounced "wu-long") are semi-oxidized and express characteristics in-between green and black teas. The leaves are usually brownish in color, large in appearance and produce a very aromatic, smooth and complex brew.

WIDEST ARRAY OF FLAVORS

The cultivation and manufacture of classic oolong tea is restricted to Southeastern China and the island of Taiwan. Often, different tea estates have their preferred ways of making oolong. It is because of the intricacy of this process that oolong teas can have the widest array of flavors and aromas. High quality oolongs are among the world's most expensive teas.



Treasured by connoisseurs, oolong teas are semi-oxidized and express characteristics in-between green and black teas. Oolongs have the widest array of flavors and are among some of the world's most expensive, sought after teas.

IN-BETWEEN GREEN AND BLACK

During production, leaves are tossed in bamboo baskets to lightly bruise their edges, releasing enzymes that react with oxygen. With oolong tea, the outer part of the leaf is allowed to oxidize, but the center is kept green. Some oolongs are more oxidized and closer in character to black teas, with amber-colored infusions and notes of dark chocolate, fruit and roasted sugar. Other oolongs are less oxidized and are closer to green tea, with a lighter body, floral aromatics and golden green infusions.

HEALTH BENEFITS

In terms of health benefits, oolong tea is said to reduce plaque in the arteries, lower cholesterol, boost metabolism and aid weight-loss. Research conducted in Japan, China and Taiwan reports that regular consumption of oolong tea is linked to the reduction of cholesterol and the lowering of blood sugar. Its reputation as a safe, daily slimming and dieter's tea in Southeastern Asia has been widespread for hundreds of years.

Oolong is said to reduce plaque in the arteries, lower cholesterol, boost metabolism and aid weight-loss.

BLACK TEA

The most widely known variety in the West, Black Tea comes from leaves that are fully oxidized. Classic teas like English Breakfast and Earl Grey fall within this category.

PRODUCTION AND OXIDATION

To make black tea, freshly-picked leaves are withered until they are pliable enough to be rolled, releasing juices and enzymes that react with oxygen. The bruised and sticky leaves, whose juices are now exposed to the air, are spread out and allowed to react with oxygen. They begin to turn brown, as would a freshly sliced apple. After the leaves are oxidized, they are fired to "seal" and dry the leaf--preventing any further changes. Oxidation changes the leaf's properties and accounts for the dark, rich colors and strong, brisk flavors characteristic of this tea type. Essentially, it is this oxidation process that makes black tea different from green tea.



BRISK, RICH, MALT FLAVORS

The flavor, color, body, strength and aroma of black tea depend on the tea bush varietal, season of harvest, elevation, country of origin, microclimate and degree of oxidation. High quality black teas yield a deep red or vibrant brown infusion with brisk, malty flavors and notes such as Muscat grapes, raisins, sugar dates, dark chocolate or bold fruit.



Black tea is the most widely known variety in the west. Classic teas like English Breakfast and Earl Grey fall within this category.

LEAF SIZE

Black tea is often further divided into broken-leaf and full-leaf categories. A broken-leaf tea consists of leaves that have been purposely broken into small pieces during processing. The smaller size allows the water to extract more of the tealeaves' components in a short period of time. For this reason, broken leaf teas tend to be more brisk and higher in caffeine, making them an excellent morning tea to be paired with milk and sugar. Full-leaf teas, on the other hand, tend to be more refined and gentler on the palate. Broken-leaf teas are not to be confused with "fannings" or "dust" used in common paper tea bags, which consist of the poorest quality tea that becomes stale very quickly due to its powdered consistency and high surface-to-air ratio.

HEALTH BENEFITS

Black teas are especially rich in theaflavins and thearubigens (potent antioxidants) which have shown impressive cholesterol-lowering abilities and cardiovascular benefits.

Now that we have explored the 4 types of "true" teas, we present the other major tea category: **herbal teas**. There are hundreds of **herbal teas**, made from the flowers, spices, leaves or fruits from a variety of plants.

HERBAL TEA

WHAT IS HERBAL TEA?

As mentioned earlier, all true tea comes from the tea plant, called the *Camellia sinensis*. Any leaf, root, fruit or flower that comes from a plant other than the tea plant is considered an **herbal tea**. For example, chamomile flowers, peppermint leaves, spice blends, *yerba maté* and *rooibos* (which is often called **red tea**) are considered **herbal teas** because they do not come from the traditional tea plant.

Since ancient times, **herbal teas** have been revered for their bountiful health benefits and therapeutic properties. **Herbal teas** are often used to aid digestion, soothe allergies, relieve headaches and reduce stress. Continuing this tradition, Octavia's **herbal teas** are based on ancient homeopathic remedies, blended with quality, flavor and health benefits in mind.

Most **herbal teas** are naturally 100% caffeine-free, making them an excellent choice for evening or for people with caffeine-sensitivities. It is important to distinguish between different types of **herbal tea**, since health benefits and flavor vary dramatically from plant to plant. Here are just a few of our most popular **herbal tea** categories:

RED TEA (ROOIBOS)

FLAVOR AND HEALTH BENEFITS

Also called **red tea** because of its vibrant, ruby red color, *rooibos* (pronounced "roy-boss") has a sweet, full-bodied flavor without a trace of bitterness. As a source of powerful antioxidants, *rooibos* strengthens the body's immune system and contains some of the highest known levels of anti-aging properties of any plant on earth. *Rooibos* is also known for its ability to replenish the skin from the inside out, promote restful sleep, and aid relaxation.

Prized for its antioxidant content, this therapeutic **herbal tea** offers many of the same health promoting properties as **green tea**, but is 100% caffeine-free, making it an ideal choice for evening or for people sensitive to caffeine. Like **green tea**, the potent antioxidants in *rooibos* are believed to fight aging, cancer and heart disease, support the immune system and improve overall health. *Rooibos* is also recommended for allergies, headaches, skin health, stress, anxiety or insomnia.

ORIGIN: SOUTH AFRICA

Because *rooibos* comes from a shrub-like botanical known as the "African Red Bush" (rather than the traditional tea plant), *rooibos* is considered an **herbal tea**. Originally consumed by the Koi and San nomadic tribes of South Africa, *rooibos* grows in a small area near Cape Town with no alternative source available anywhere in the world. It is no surprise that such a remarkable, nutritious herb comes from this region. With one of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world, the Western Cape of South Africa has 3 times as many species per square meter than the South American rainforest.

In an area so rich in biodiversity, it is especially critical to protect the health of the environment. Octavia Tea supports gardens that place strict controls on conservation of the environment through sustainable natural and organic farming methods. This makes an enormous difference, not only for the health of the environment and wildlife, but also for the people living and working in this region.



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YERBA MATE

FLAVOR AND HEALTH BENEFITS

Yerba mate (pronounced yer-bah MAH-tay) is indigenous to the subtropical rainforests of Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil. Mate is gaining popularity in the United States for its robust antioxidant content and for its natural ability to boost energy, improve mood and aid weight-loss.

An infusion brewed from the dried leaves and stems of the *Ilex paraguarensis* tree, mate has a robust, earthy flavor that provides natural energy as well as a healthy dose of antioxidants. This stimulating herbal tea has the ability to energize without the nervousness and jitters associated with coffee. Unlike other herbal teas, mate contains a substance similar to caffeine known as mateine. It is responsible for yerba mate's uplifting energy and should not be consumed by those who avoid caffeine.



Traditional Gourd and Bombilla for Brewing Yerba Mate

ORIGIN: AMAZON RAINFOREST

Deemed the "Drink of the Gods" by many indigenous groups, mate is consumed widely in South America (6 to 1 over coffee) and has been used for centuries as an herbal remedy. A special tradition has developed over the centuries for drinking yerba mate. A hollowed-out gourd is filled with mate leaves and a bombilla (straw filter) is inserted. The gourd is repeatedly filled with hot water as the beverage is passed in a circle from person to person. This method of enjoying yerba mate inspires openness between friends, nourishing both their bodies and their relationships. Mate is such an important part of daily life that many South Americans carry yerba mate with them everywhere they go!

When harvested according to natural and organic methods, mate is a renewable rainforest product and is part of a socially and environmentally conscious movement to promote non-timber forestry products in the Amazon rainforest. Octavia Tea's yerba mate protects the precious rainforests through the production and promotion of a sustainable product, offering people a viable alternative income to destructive logging and cattle ranching.

CHAMOMILE

Chamomile is an aromatic perennial flower, producing feathery leaves and white, daisy-like flower heads with yellow centers. Chamomile has a bright, golden-colored infusion and a fragrance reminiscent of honey, fruit blossoms and apples. It is often taken with honey and lemon.

THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS

Chamomile has been prized for thousands of years for its therapeutic effects. In fact, chamomile was dedicated to the ancient Egyptian gods for its ability to calm the mind and comfort the senses. Hieroglyphic records show that Egyptian noblewomen drank chamomile and used preparations of crushed chamomile petals on their skin.

Today, chamomile is used as a nurturing herbal tea ideal for countering PMS, easing stress, relieving headaches and enhancing a peaceful night's sleep. Chamomile is also known to have anti-inflammatory and anti-allergic properties as well as acting as a digestive stimulant, muscle relaxant and mild sedative. Chamomile may be a beneficial treatment for arthritis and is even used in lotions and cosmetics for its soothing, anti-allergic properties on the skin. The MedlinePlus database maintained by the U.S. National Library of Medicine lists over 100 separate ailments and conditions which chamomile has been traditionally used to treat.

Although most people find that chamomile helps relieve allergies and irritations, a small percentage of people are allergic to the flower.



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QUALITY & FLAVOR

THE TEA PLANT

LOCATION

The tea plant, called the *Camellia sinensis*, is native to mainland of South and Southeast Asia. Although tea is cultivated in subtropical regions across the world (including Africa, South America and the Middle East), the best and most expensive teas usually come from either China, Taiwan (Formosa), Japan, India and Sri Lanka (Ceylon).

RAINFALL

Tea plants require at least 50 inches of rainfall a year and are cultivated at elevations of up to 7,000 feet. Not enough rain causes inadequate nutrition for the plant. However, too much rain causes the leaves to grow rapidly, in which case they lose their distinctive, complex flavor.

ELEVATION

Tea plants grown in high elevations produce leaves at a slower rate, which often translates into a better flavor. Misty sea or mountain clouds that cloak tea-growing regions can keep leaves moist as they grow, and also exclude direct sunlight, forcing the leaf to develop more slowly and to compensate chemically for the absence of sunlight. Less caffeine is developed while the amount of chlorophyll in the leaf increases, creating unique flavors. The temperature of tea growing regions can also affect the developing leaf, accounting for changes in chemical structure and flavor.

PRUNING

If left undisturbed, most varieties of the tea plant will grow into a tree. However, cultivated plants are pruned to waist height for ease of plucking.

VARIETALS

Botanists recognize more than 2,000 varietals, or subspecies, of the tea plant--accounting for thousands of different types of tea, each with their own unique characteristics and flavor profiles. For example, teas made from the Indian tea plant are generally stronger and take well to milk and sugar, while teas from the Chinese tea plant are typically subtle with floral undertones.

HARVESTING

INFLUENCES ON FLAVOR

Like fine wine, tea's flavor is influenced by the tea bush varietal, country of origin, season of harvest, climate, soil, elevation, at what time of day and how it is picked, processing, degree of oxidation, blending, packaging, transportation and storage. Tea experts can determine the type of tea, country of origin and, often, the time of year a tea was produced just by its appearance and taste.

FLUSHES

During harvesting, only the top 1-2 inches of the plant are picked. These buds and leaves are called "flushes." A plant will grow a new flush several times during the growing season. The flavor of the tealeaf changes with each flush throughout the summer and into fall. The best teas typically come from the 1st or 2nd flushes because it takes the plant all year to store the proper nutrients to create high quality leaves. Depending on the region, teas are often plucked 3-4 times during the growing season, with the older, courser leaves coming from the late season harvests.



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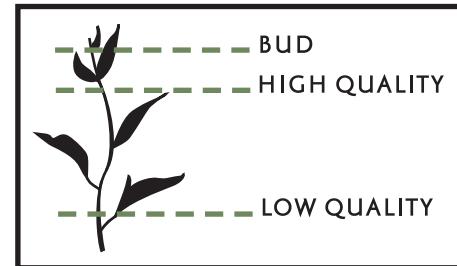
First flush leaves (which come from the first harvest of the season in early spring) are highly sought after for teas coming from the Darjeeling region, although second flush Darjeelings also have their own unique and prized character. On the other hand, most Assam tea drinkers prefer second flush teas because the leaves develop more strength and aroma from longer exposure to stronger sunlight.

HAND PLUCKING

The leaves used during processing greatly influence both quality and taste. While some tea plantations use machines to assist in manufacturing, the best and most expensive teas are still harvested as they were thousands of years ago—by hand. Tea pickers, carrying straw baskets on their backs, collect each leaf individually from rows of tea plants. Most tea is harvested by coarse plucking, in which the bud and top four leaves of a branch are picked. Higher quality teas require fine plucking and use only the bud and top two leaves.

High quality tea is made from the bud and/or 1st set of leaves on the tea plant during the 1st and 2nd flush.

Mass-produced teabags are made from the older, coarser leaves of late season harvests.



OXIDATION

Oxidation, the process of exposing tealeaves to oxygen after harvesting, is one of the biggest factors influencing tea's flavor. Tealeaves that will become green tea, for example, are briefly cooked using either steam or dry heat. The drying process "seals" the leaf and captures the plant's original green color and fresh flavor. Tealeaves that will become black tea, on the other hand, are laid out to wither (which allows most of the water to evaporate) until they are pliable enough to be rolled. The leaves are then rolled (either by hand or machine) which cracks the surface of the leaf and releases juices and enzymes. The bruised and sticky leaves, whose juices are now exposed to air, are spread out and allowed to turn brown. This natural process, called oxidation, is similar to the ripening of fruit. Oolong tea is partially oxidized (in between green and black tea) while white tea is left virtually untouched. After the leaves are oxidized, they are fired to "seal" and dry the leaf--preventing any further changes.

CHANGING FLAVOR AND AROMA

The oxidation process changes tea's color and flavor and gives it more body. By selectively exposing the tealeaves to oxygen, tea producers can bring out certain flavors and aromas. In other words, this oxidation process will determine many of the tea's flavor characteristics as well as whether the tea will end up as white, green, oolong or black.



Tea Garden in Zhejian, China

EVALUATING QUALITY

Tea's quality can be determined by a combination of factors including: the region-of-origin, the style or type of tea, the appearance of the dried leaf, the color of the infusion, and finally, the taste and aroma.

ORIGIN & STYLE

Teas are often classified by region because, as with fine wine, each tea-producing region yields teas with flavor profiles and characteristics unique to that part of the world, country and even the individual garden. The country-of-origin gives buyers an indication of what to expect in terms of flavor. For example, a Chinese green tea often tastes quite different from a Japanese or Indian green tea. Both the individual tea gardens and their respective regions have recognizable styles and flavors, just as individual wineries differ both within, for example, Napa Valley and with other wine producing regions. For example, Assam and Darjeeling are two of the most famous tea producing regions in India, each with distinctively different flavor profiles. With practice, you will be surprised how quickly you can learn these differences!



Tea Experts can determine the type of tea, country of origin and, often, the time of year a tea was produced just by its appearance and taste.

When evaluating the quality of a specific tea, experts consider the variety of tea, the region-of-origin, the time of harvest and the method of manufacture. These factors must be taken into account because certain characteristics are pleasurable in certain teas, but not in others. For example, a black tea from Assam should have a thick, rich, malty flavor. If an Assam tea is described as "thin" (lacking body or thickness), this would be a negative trait. However, a black tea from Darjeeling is celebrated for its thinner texture, which allows the drinker to appreciate this tea's complex, floral nuances.

LEAF SIZE AND SHAPE

When evaluating the appearance of the leaf as an indicator of quality, it is important to consider what size, shape and style is appropriate to that specific variety of tea. For example, although large, unbroken leaves are often present in high quality teas, bigger isn't always better. Some extremely high quality Japanese teas come from tiny, needle-like leaves that half the size of their lower-quality counterparts, which come from larger, older leaves. Also, because some teas are tightly rolled during processing, the actual size of the leaf may not be visible until after it unfurls in hot water.

Also, some teas (often black teas) can be made from broken leaf grades and still be exceptional in quality and flavor. In fact, certain types of tea are purposely broken into small pieces during processing to enhance flavor. The smaller size allows the water to extract more of the tealeaves' components in a short period of time. Broken-leaf teas are not to be confused with "fannings" or "dust" used in common paper tea bags, which consist of the poorest quality tea that becomes stale very quickly due to its powdered consistency and high surface-to-air ratio.

OTHER TRAITS

Regardless of the actual leaf size, high quality teas should be uniform in size throughout. Other traits vary depending upon the type of tea. For example, the presence of small hairs or down (resembling the skin of a peach) is a good indicator of quality for white tea. Golden tips on the ends of black tealeaves is also a sign of quality. Different tea types have their own, specific shape. Oolong tea is often rolled into tight balls or loose spirals, while green tea often has a flat, sword-like shape or a twisty, wirey appearance. Tenderness is another factor, as the best teas are made from first 2 leaves and the tips. The leaves should not be rock hard.

CUP COLOR

The actual color (from pale gold, light or bright green, orange or ruby red, amber or deep brown) varies depending on the type of tea. Once the tea is first brewed, the cup color should be vibrant, clear and bright (although some teas naturally become cloudy once they cool and hard water can also cause good teas to turn cloudy).

TASTE AND AROMA

The taste and aroma is, of course, the most important indicator of quality. Certainly, taste is subjective and not all tea drinkers share the same opinions. But, in general, freshly brewed, good quality tea should have a fresh, lasting aroma, a refreshing first taste and a lingering after taste. If the tea has a bitter note, it should be balanced and not overpowering. It should be noted that over steeping or incorrect brewing can make even the highest quality teas go bitter.

BLENDED & SCENTED TEA

Any tea can be enhanced with herbs, spices, flowers, fruits, essential oils and flavors to create whimsical, imaginative blends. When done well, the addition of interesting, flavorful ingredients can bring out special characteristics unique to each tea. The most well-known, classically flavored teas are: jasmine, chai and Earl Grey.

JASMINE TEA

Jasmine tea comes from tealeaves that are blended with fresh jasmine flowers in a traditional scenting process. The tea absorbs the natural essence of jasmine, even though the flowers are later removed. Jasmine tea originated in China and was popular as far back as the Song Dynasty (960-1270 AD). Traditional Chinese medicine recommends jasmine tea to decrease anxiety, increase circulation, aid digestion and break down saturated fat. With its intoxicating, floral aroma, jasmine tea is also considered a romance enhancer, helping all aspects of love.

A similar floral scenting process can be used with rose, lavender and osthmanthus (a delicate, Chinese flower with a lightly sweet fragrance also used in high-end perfumes).

CHAI (SPICED TEA)

Originating in India and recently gaining popularity in the US, chai (which rhymes with "bye") is a blend of rich black tea and aromatic spices, such as cinnamon, cardamom, clove, ginger and sometimes pepper. Originally, poorer segments of society added spice to tea as a way to make their tea last longer. Today, drinking tea with added spice is considered trendy and quite gourmet! Spiced tea is so popular in India, the word "chai" actually means "tea" in Hindi, and is derived from the word "cha" which means tea in many eastern languages. Traditional chai is often served like a "latte", simmered in water, milk and sugar.

EARL GREY

Earl Grey is a classic British tea and the most popular tea in the Western World. Earl Grey blends bold-flavored black tea with bergamot oil, which comes from a Mediterranean citrus fruit. Bergamot gives this rich, black tea a slightly flowery and sweet citrus aroma. Earl Grey dates back to the 19th Century Chinese-British trade of opium, silk, porcelain and tea.

NATURAL AND ORGANIC INGREDIENTS

Whenever considering blended, scented and aromatized teas, be sure that the essential oils and flavors used are natural ... many companies use artificial flavors because they are cheaper.

At Octavia Tea, we specialize in offering an astounding selection of blended and aromatized teas made from only pure fruits, flowers, herbs, spices and 100% natural and organic essential oils and flavors.

For example, Jasmine Pearl is made by infusing hand-rolled tealeaves with fresh jasmine. It takes nearly 2,000 hand-plucked leaves to fill a single tin. After plucking, the leaves are layered with more than 10 times their weight in jasmine flowers, which bloom in the cool night air and leave behind their intoxicating fragrance. It takes more than 10 pounds of flowers to make 1 pound of jasmine tea. Although the jasmine flowers are removed from the final product, the sweet, soothing scent remains—absorbed in the leaves themselves. Jasmine Pearl is one of the world's finest delicacies and most prized teas.

Our twist on a traditional Chai tea, Harvest Orange Spice is made by balancing a brisk, rich broken-grade black tea (for added strength) with exotic spices—such as cinnamon, cardamom, clove and ginger. We then add pure essential oil of orange, which gives the final blend an added citrus note.

Explore more of our blended and scented teas by browsing in our online shop.



*Octavia Tea specializes
in whimsical,
imaginative blends
made from only the
best 100% natural and
certified organic
ingredients.*

BREWING TIPS



HOW TO BREW THE PERFECT CUP

Once you know the basics, brewing the perfect cup of tea is easy! If you can boil water, you can make tea. Fine tuning the flavor is essentially a game of maneuvering and adjusting 3 elements: water temperature, steep time and amount of tea used.

With just a little practice, preparing a great tasting cup of tea is easy and will quickly become second nature. The right brewing equipment can also further simplify the process.

We've outlined basic instructions as well as some additional tips to help you get started....

BASIC DIRECTIONS:

1. Bring fresh, cold water to a rolling boil. Always start with the freshest, purest source of water available as this will heavily impact tea's flavor ... it is the main ingredient, after all!
2. Add tealeaves to a teapot, fill-your-own teabag or infuser basket. Use 1 teaspoon – 3 teaspoons (1 tablespoon) per cup (8 oz) of water depending upon desired strength. Adjust to taste.
3. Pour boiling water directly over black, oolong and herbal tea. Allow water to cool slightly before brewing green tea, white tea or yerba maté. Cover.
4. Infuse (steep) leaves for 2-5 minutes; 3.5 minutes is a good standard steep time that works well for most teas. Do not oversteep or tea may become bitter. If you prefer strong tea, do not over steep; simply use more leaves.
5. Remove tea sachet, bag or infuser from water or strain leaves. ENJOY!

ADDITIONAL TEA BREWING TIPS:

Don't Over Steep

Over steeping can make tea taste bitter. If you prefer strong tea, do not over steep; simply use more leaves. Most teas taste best when brewed for 2-5 minutes. We recommend starting with a standard steep time of 3.5 minutes. This works well for most teas and is a great place to start. Simply adjust steep time to meet your personal taste. Green teas are notoriously fussy about steep times, as they easily go bitter. Other teas (such as red tea, white tea, chamomile and oolong) are usually much more flexible.

If your tea becomes too bitter, you may wish to either decrease the steep time or lower the water temperature. If your tea is too weak, you may wish to increase the steep time slightly, increase the water temperature or simply use an extra teaspoon of tea.

Water Quality

Even the best tea will taste only as good as the water used to prepare it. Always start with the freshest, purest source of water available. Avoid distilled, mineral and soft tap water, which will weaken tea's flavor or impart a "chemical" or "off" taste. Filtered tap water or bottled spring water work best and will provide a lively, aromatic infusion.

Do you serve tea at a restaurant or café?

Learn how to brew tea specifically for food service in the "Wholesale" section of our website.

Water Temperature

The ideal water temperature for brewing most teas is around 195° F (water boils at 212° F; this is just slightly under boiling). If the water is too hot, some teas may go bitter. If the water is not hot enough, the tea will taste dull and flat.

So how do you achieve the perfect water temperature for your tea? We recommend bringing water to a full boil and then allowing it to cool for just a minute or two. Water loses heat rapidly, so it won't take long to reach the ideal temperature. However, please be patient and allow the water to reach a full boil first. It is difficult to judge the temperature of water before it reaches its boiling point; if you remove it too early, the water may not be hot enough to extract the full flavor from the leaf.

If you drink tea on a regular basis, an electric water heater will make your life easy! These wonderful little machines keep up to 5 liters of water at a constant 195° F throughout the day. Alternatively, stovetop kettles or electric water kettles are a good option. Although microwaves will do the job, it is a little tougher to judge temperature this way.

Warm the Teapot

To keep the brewing temperature constant, we recommend using a teapot or cup with a lid. You can also pre-heat your teapot by rinsing it with hot water before use.

Serving Size

Technically, the serving size for tea is 2.5 grams of tealeaves per cup (8 ounces) of water. In the past, when black tea was the standard in Europe and the US, tea-drinkers developed the rule of "1-teaspoon-per-cup," because 1 teaspoon of black tea typically weighs 2.5 grams. However, as gourmet teas (which vary in density, leaf size and weight) become more popular, this rule has become outdated.

Don't worry! Serving size is more of an art than a science. Unless you taste tea professionally, there is no need to weigh each spoonful. Experiment until you find the amount perfect for your taste. Heavy, dense teas (such as Jasmine Pearl, tightly rolled oolongs and broken-leaf black tea) usually taste great following the traditional "1-teaspoon-per-cup" rule. However, light, voluminous teas with large leaves (such as white tea, chamomile, and loosely-rolled greens and oolongs) tastes best with 2 or even 3 times this amount.

In general, the larger and lighter the leaf, the more tea you will use. It is a good idea to measure the size of your cup. Unless you are using a dainty, porcelain teacup, there is a good chance your cup-of-choice holds more than 8 ounces. Adjust serving size accordingly.

Milk, Sugar & Honey

Strong, black teas (our Harvest Orange Spice is a perfect example) taste wonderful with a touch of milk, sugar or honey. Gentle green and white teas may be overwhelmed by these additional ingredients. Let your personal taste guide you.

Leaves Before Water

Always add the tealeaves to your cup or teapot first, and pour the water over. The act of pouring water over the tealeaves creates a little whirlpool effect that mixes the tea and water perfectly, beginning the brewing process. If you add a strainer to an already filled cup or teapot, it may overflow. Also, the tealeaves will simply float on top, rather than being fully submerged.

Room to Expand

Tea expands 2-5 times its size in water. Therefore, we recommend using strainers or bags that allow ample room for the tealeaves to expand. Large strainers provide plenty of room for the water to flow around the leaves, yielding a better, more aromatic flavor.

Don't Judge by Color

Different types of tea will yield their own unique hue. For example, white tea naturally brews a pale, golden color while black tea will yield an intense, deep ruby-red or chocolate brown. Instead of using color to tell you when a tea's done steeping, simply use a timer.

Multiple Infusions

High-quality tea can be steeped multiple times. Increase steeping time 1 minute with each subsequent infusion.

Iced Tea

To make fresh iced tea, follow the directions above but use twice as much tea to account for dilution by ice. Once cool, pour over an ice-filled cup and garnish with lemon, fruit or mint. According to the USDA's report on the antioxidant content of food, fresh iced tea contains 20 times more antioxidants than bottled or canned iced tea.

Be creative when serving tea over ice. Garnish with lemon slices, fresh mint sprigs or "Sangria Style" with diced fruit and fresh berries. Frozen berries or banana slices can replace traditional ice cubes, adding flavor. You can also add pomegranate or other fruit juices (either fresh or frozen juice ice cubes) to make more of a cocktail; experiment so these additional flavors enhance rather than mask the flavor of the tea.



Studies suggest that tea (and, in fact, any fresh fruit or vegetable) may lose vitamins and antioxidants over time. Always purchase from a trusted supplier and store tea properly to maintain freshness and flavor.

Storage

Studies suggest that tea (and, in fact, any fresh fruit or vegetable) may lose vitamins and antioxidants over time. To keep tea fresh, we recommend:

1. Always purchase tea from a trusted supplier to ensure you are getting the freshest crop possible.
2. Avoid "fannings" or tea dust. Used in mass produced tea bags, fannings are the lowest grade of tea. Because it is in powdered form, the increased surface-to-air ratio makes this grade of tea go stale much faster. Also, mass produced tea bags are almost always packaged in paper or plastic, which does little to preserve freshness.
3. Store tea tightly sealed in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight and strong odors. Do not refrigerate. Tea should never be stored in plastic, glass or paper. Although it is beautiful to look at, tea stored in glass containers will lose freshness and flavor within days. Also, tea easily absorbs scents around it. For this reason, we do not recommend storing tea in your spice cabinet.
4. Whether you prefer hot or iced tea, always prepare it fresh. According to the USDA's report on the antioxidant content of fresh food, fresh iced tea may contain 20 times more antioxidants than bottled or canned iced teas.
5. The tea industry recommends drinking tea within 1-2 years of purchase. Tea rarely goes bad, but it will lose freshness, flavor and contain less health benefits.

Shelf-Life

We typically recommend drinking tea within 1 year of purchase, although the tea industry generally considers 2 years acceptable. Tea more than 2 years old usually won't go bad, it will simply lose freshness, flavor and contain less health benefits.

Although teas, herbs and spices rarely go bad, please remember that, as with any natural food product, it is possible. On very rare occasions, it is possible for tea (especially teas containing dried fruits or flowers) to attract pests or mold—especially if the tea is exposed to moisture or heat. For this reason, please do not refrigerate your tea as this will create condensation once returned to room temperature. Our warehouse is equipped with ideal temperature and moisture control systems to ensure you get the freshest tea possible.

CAFFEINE INFO

TEA AND CAFFEINE

NATURALLY OCCURRING

Caffeine is a naturally occurring substance found in the beans, leaves and fruits of certain plants, where it protects the health of the plant and acts as a natural pesticide to ward off insects.

UPLIFTING EFFECTS

One of the benefits of tea drinking, at least for many of us, is that tea contains caffeine. In moderation, tea's caffeine has many positive effects on the body and is considered a safe, natural and effective way to get a quick boost. The caffeine found in tea can increase mental alertness, improve muscle action, shorten reaction time, and stimulate the digestive system, kidneys and metabolism in ways that possibly help eliminate toxins.

SENSITIVITIES

Of course, for those who are sensitive to this substance, caffeine's presence in tea might not be so welcome. Also, too much caffeine in the diet may cause restlessness, loss of appetite or difficulty sleeping.

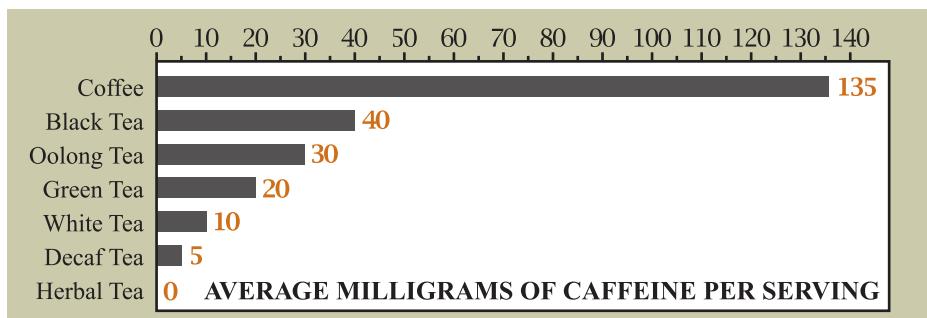
Caffeine has acquired a negative (but unfair) reputation due to its overuse as well as its association with artificial energy drinks, sugary soft drinks, energy pills, diet pills and other medications. It is important to remember that caffeine found in tea is naturally occurring, and that the health benefits associated with this remarkable beverage have been enjoyed safely for thousands of years.

CAFFEINE AND TEA'S HEALTH BENEFITS

In fact, some people argue that caffeine plays a critical role in delivering many of tea's health benefits. In other words, it seems that all the elements found in tea—including caffeine—must work together to maximize the healthy benefits associated with regular tea consumption.

For example, caffeine seems to work synergistically with tea's antioxidants to possibly increase protection from cancer. Also, tea's unique combination of caffeine and potent antioxidants appears to promote weight loss, increase metabolism, act as a mild appetite suppressant and prevent the accumulation of abdominal fat more than either of these substances could on their own. The International Journal of Obesity reports, "such a synergistic interaction between catechin-polyphenols (antioxidants) and caffeine to augment and prolong sympathetic stimulation of thermogenesis (an increase in metabolism) could be of value in assisting the management of obesity." Researchers at the University of Florida suggest that tea and caffeine may help reverse memory problems associated with Alzheimer's disease, but more research needs to be done in this area.

The following chart compares average caffeine-content:



Tea is a great choice if you are looking for a low-caffeine drink.

In fact, a cup of black tea has about a third of the caffeine as a cup of coffee and a cup of green tea has less caffeine than a bar of dark chocolate.

It would take 15 cups of green tea to equal the 300 mg of caffeine per day considered moderate consumption by the Food and Drug Administration.

TEA'S GENTLE EFFECTS

LOW CAFFEINE

Tea is a great choice if you are looking for a low-caffeine drink. In fact, a cup of black tea has about a third of the caffeine as a cup of coffee and a cup of green tea has less caffeine than a bar of dark chocolate. It would take 15 cups of green tea to equal the 300 mg of caffeine per day considered moderate consumption by the Food and Drug Administration.

GENTLE EFFECTS

The caffeine in tea is gentle; many people sensitive to caffeine in coffee and soda can drink tea without a problem. Not only does tea contain less caffeine than many other beverages, the caffeine in tea actually works differently in the body because it binds with other components of the leaf (such as polyphenols), creating a slower and gentler release. Because the caffeine is released slowly, tea provides a gentle lift in energy, mood and concentration without the crash associated with coffee. The caffeine found in a cup of tea doesn't appear to raise the heart rate or blood pressure the way that other forms of caffeine do. In addition, theanine (found almost exclusively in high-grade tea) counteracts the effects of caffeine by stimulating the production of alpha brain waves, which calms the body and promotes a state of relaxed awareness.



Jasmine Tea

CAFFEINE-FREE VERSUS DECAFFEINATED

It is important to differentiate between "decaffeinated" and "100% caffeine-free." Decaffeinated tea has gone through a chemical process in which most of the leaf's natural caffeine has been removed, while 100% caffeine-free tea comes from plants that do not have any caffeine to begin with. For example, herbal teas such as peppermint, chamomile and red tea are 100% caffeine free because they come from plants that do not contain caffeine.

As a general rule, Octavia Tea does not offer decaffeinated teas because commercial decaffeination processes (even those considered 'natural') use chemical solvents to strip the leaf of caffeine. Unfortunately, commercial decaffeination also removes much of tea's flavor and health benefits. In fact, a 2003 study conducted by the UCLA Center for Human Nutrition found that decaffeinated tea contains only one third of the catechins (one of tea's most potent antioxidants) found in regular tea. Another study conducted by the US Department of Agriculture showed similar results. Furthermore, because the decaffeination process greatly affects tea's overall flavor, you will rarely see decaffeinated teas of high quality (it would simply be a waste because it would drastically lower the quality and flavor of high-grade tea).

Although we do not offer commercially decaffeinated teas, we do offer other options:

100% CAFFEINE-FREE TEAS

People sensitive to caffeine may wish to drink Octavia Tea's 100% caffeine-free alternatives such as red tea or chamomile. These herbal tea's soothing, calming properties are a wonderful choice for evening.

DECAFFEINATE AT HOME

Caffeine-sensitive tea-drinkers can naturally decaffeinate their tea at home—using only hot water. Simply infuse tealeaves in hot water for 30 seconds or longer, discard liquid, add more hot water to the same leaves and steep again.

1. Brew tea for 30 seconds.
2. Discard water.
3. Use the 'decaffeinated' leaves and brew as normal.

Please note: although following the steps above will lower the overall caffeine in your cup, results will vary and this method will never remove all of tea's caffeine. Tea drinkers with extreme sensitivities, or those looking for a bedtime tea, should instead opt for 100% caffeine-free herbal alternatives such as red tea or chamomile.

CAFFEINE AND FLUID INTAKE

Caffeine is a diuretic. However, the water consumed with tea more than replaces any fluids you lose due to the diuretic effect. Therefore, tea also provides a tasty way to increase water in your diet.

HEALTH BENEFITS

TEA AND HEALTH

Whether hot or iced, tea made from real tealeaves provides more than just great taste. Tea cleanses the body, lifts mood, eases anxiety and restores our sense of well being. Scientific studies suggest abundant health benefits and disease-fighting properties from a daily cup.

WHAT MAKES TEA SO HEALTHY?

What makes tea so healthy? Researchers are working around the globe trying to answer this very question! Although we do not have all the answers, we do know that tea contains potent antioxidants that are many times stronger than antioxidant-powerhouses vitamins C and E. Tea also contains soothing, stress-relieving properties and has no fat, carbs or sodium and virtually no calories. Tea is also the only source for a remarkable amino acid called Theanine, which can reduce anxiety and improve mood.



You may have noticed that drinking a cup of tea feels nurturing and comforting. This is not your imagination! Theanine, an amino acid found in high quality tea, is a natural anti-depressant and stress-reliever.

STRESS RELIEVING PROPERTIES

You may have noticed that drinking a cup of tea feels nurturing and comforting. This is not your imagination! Scientists have discovered that theanine, a rare amino acid found exclusively in high-quality tea, acts as a natural anti-depressant and has many beneficial and calming effects on the body.

IMPROVE MOOD, REDUCE ANXIETY

Theanine is known to promote mental and physical relaxation, improve mood and reduce anxiety without causing drowsiness. Its consumption stimulates the production of alpha brain waves, which create a state of deep relaxation and mental alertness similar to what is achieved through meditation. Theanine also positively affects neurotransmitters in the brain, such as dopamine and serotonin, creating a relaxed, happy feeling. Coupled with caffeine, the theanine-induced alpha brainwaves lead to an uplifted mental mood, often described as a state of calm alertness. An ancient, Chinese Tang Dynasty poet refers to this effect as "Tea Drunk."

In addition to reducing stress and lifting mood, scientists believe that theanine may also increase concentration and memory, combat PMS, and regulate blood pressure.

POWERFUL ANTIOXIDANTS

Tea is one of the richest sources of dietary antioxidants. In fact, a single cup of tea may have the antioxidant equivalent of over 10 servings of fruits or vegetables. Antioxidants play an important role in maintaining health by preventing free radicals (unstable molecules) from causing damage to cells, which may otherwise lead to disease, aging, and cancer.

WHAT ARE FREE RADICALS?

Spawning from environmental pollution, toxins, pesticides, sunlight, food and natural metabolic activity in the body, free radicals are vicious, unstable molecules missing an electron in their outer shell. Free radicals destroy living tissue by stealing electrons from healthy cells, damaging them in the process. If not for our body's defenses, free radicals would rapidly accelerate the aging process and severely damage the ability of the immune system to battle infection. Oxidative stress on a cellular level can damage DNA and has been linked to the onset of illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. Antioxidants prevent free radicals, the unstable molecules that result from oxidation, from damaging cells.

ANTIOXIDANT PROTECTION

Many experts believe that the best way to provide the body with the most complete protection against free radicals is to consume a large variety of antioxidants. Tea contains some of nature's most potent antioxidants. Regular tea drinking is recommended to protect and heal the body, as well as to keep our cells young and healthy.



Tea cleanses the body, modifies the metabolism to detoxify harmful chemicals, boosts immune system functioning and may protect against diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

WHICH TEA IS HEALTHIEST?

Different types of tea contain different types of antioxidants, so, just as you wouldn't eat only one kind of vegetable, drinking a variety of teas may provide an increased spectrum of healthy benefits.

Although more clinical studies are required to establish the true physiological relevance of tea's antioxidants, it appears that green tea's catechins are especially suited for cancer prevention, immune system function and anti-aging, while black tea's theaflavins and thearubigins may prevent heart disease and have positive effects on the cardiovascular system.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF ANTIOXIDANTS

Although green and white teas are reported to have the highest levels of antioxidants, all true teas are rich in antioxidants and health-promoting properties. Regardless of which tea you choose, you really can't go wrong.

PERSONAL TASTE

Because green, black, white and oolong tea all come from the same plant, the benefits are going to be similar overall. We encourage customers to select teas based on personal taste. After all, the tea that is healthiest for you is the one you will drink the most!

HOW MANY CUPS SHOULD YOU DRINK A DAY?

Most research that shows a link between tea and health is based on regular, daily tea-drinking of around 2-5 cups per day. However, multiple studies have shown benefits from as little as single cup.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

For the most part, studies conducted on green and black tea (which are both from the *Camellia sinensis* plant) yield similar results. Although research often focuses on tea's antioxidants, tea's health benefits may operate through a number of different mechanisms still being explored. Research suggest that regular tea drinking may reduce the risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and neuro-degenerative disorders. Tea may also lower cholesterol, reduce anxiety, improve mood, boost immune system functioning, aid weight loss and even slow the aging process.

- **Reduce the risk of heart attack by 44%**
(*Harvard study*)
- **Lower bad LDL cholesterol by up to 11%**
(*The Journal of Nutrition*)
- **Lower the risk of developing high blood pressure**
(*Archives of Internal Medicine*)
- **Aid weight-loss and burn fat**
(*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*)
- **Prevent the accumulation of abdominal fat**
(*The International Journal of Obesity*)
- **Combat arthritis and improve bone density**
(*Health Magazine*)
- **Lower risk of cancer and kill cancer cells**
(*Consumer Reports*)
- **Reduce the risk of breast cancer**
(*Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention*)
- **Lower the risk of developing lung cancer**
(*Prevention*)
- **Lower stress hormone levels in the body**
(*Medical News Today*)
- **Improve mood and reduce anxiety**
(*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*)
- **Strengthen the body's immune system**
(*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*)
- **Reduce wrinkles and physical signs of aging in the skin**
(*Science Daily*)
- **Modify the metabolism to detoxify harmful chemicals**
(*WebMD*)
- **Slow age-related decline in brain function**
(*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*)
- **Fight bad breath and allergies**
(*Web MD*)
- **Regulate blood sugar and reduce the risk of diabetes**
(*Newsweek*)
- **Reduce inflammation and slow cartilage breakdown**
(*Journal of Nutrition*)
- **Increase bone density and reduce the risk of osteoporosis**
(*American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*)



Tea cleanses the body, modifies the metabolism to detoxify harmful chemicals, boosts immune system functioning and may protect against diseases such as heart disease and cancer.

For more information about tea and health, please visit www.OctaviaTea.com. These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

HISTORY OF TEA



THE HISTORY OF TEA

As the most popular drink in the world after water, tea has had an enormous impact on our collective history, culture, and economics.

Tea was popular before the Egyptians built the great pyramids and was traded among Asian countries even before Europe left the dark ages. In fact, the story of tea is interwoven with royalty in all parts of the world, has influenced several major wars and is responsible for the fortunes of the first 3 American millionaires. Not bad for a few leaves!

DISCOVERY IN CHINA

According to Chinese legend, the Emperor Shennong discovered tea in the year 2737 B.C. when leaves from a wild tea tree blew into his pot of boiling water. He found the aroma inviting, tried a sip . . . and quickly drank the whole pot.

Tea was initially used in China as a medicine to treat a variety of ailments and to increase concentration and alertness. However, due to its refreshing and restorative properties, tea quickly became part of everyday life. In fact, tea became so important that the cultivation of the crop was tightly controlled-specifying that only young women were to handle the tealeaves and that these women must not eat garlic, onions, or strong spices in case the odor on their fingertips might contaminate the precious leaves.

Considered the birthplace of tea, China produces more tea today than any other country worldwide.



Tea was popular before the Egyptians built the great pyramids and was traded among Asian countries even before Europe left the dark ages.

TEA SPREADS TO SURROUNDING KINGDOMS

During the 8th century, tea began to spread outside of China. Tea's popularity in Tibet and the surrounding kingdoms led to its use as a form of currency. Pressed bricks or even coins made from dried and powdered tea could be used to buy anything and workmen and servants were routinely paid in this method.

THE JAPANESE TEA CEREMONY

At the beginning of the 9th century, Buddhist monks introduced tea to Japan. For centuries following, tea was an integral part of Japanese monastic life and monks used tea to help them stay alert during long hours of meditation. By the early 1300's tea gained popularity throughout Japanese society. Its early religious importance permanently colored the meaning and value the Japanese associate with tea and directly influenced the Japanese Tea Ceremony.

Based on the philosophies of Zen Buddhism, the Japanese Tea Ceremony evolved in the late 15th century. The ceremony places supreme importance on respecting the act of making and drinking tea. It captures the essential elements of Japanese philosophy and interweaves four principals: harmony (with nature and people), purity (of heart and mind), respect (for others) and tranquility. In essence, the tea ceremony is a quest for spiritual fulfillment through devotion and meditation of the making and serving tea and, by extension, to the humble routine of daily life. The tea ceremony was considered such an important part of Japanese society that special tea rooms were built in backyard gardens and women were required to master the art of the tea ceremony before allowing to marry.

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In 1618, the Chinese presented a gift of tea to Tsar Alexis of Russia.

TEA SPREADS TO RUSSIA AND EUROPE

In 1618, the Chinese presented a gift of tea to Tsar Alexis of Russia. Everyone was curious about the new beverage and tea quickly gained popularity. A camel caravan trade route (covering 11,000 miles of difficult terrain) emerged to transport tea into the country. To keep up with the demand, nearly 6,000 camels (carrying 600 lbs of tea each) entered Russia each year. That's over 3.5 million pounds of tea! The camel caravan ended with the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1903--cutting the journeys length from 1 1/2 years to just a few weeks. Today, Russian Caravan (a black tea blend named after this historic route) is made from tealeaves that have been dried over smokey pine fires. The leaves absorb the flavor and aroma of smoke, similar to the way the tea absorbed the scent of camels and campfires over 100 years ago.

The Portuguese were the first to bring tea into Europe, followed by the Dutch and French. Great Britain was the last of the great seafaring nations to establish a foothold in the Chinese and East Indian trade routes.

TEA AS A LUXURY

When the Portuguese and Dutch first imported tea into Europe in 1610, Shakespeare had 6 years to live and Rembrandt was 4 years old. England's relationship with tea didn't begin until 1662 when King Charles II married the Portuguese princess, Catherine of Braganza. Britain's new queen had always loved tea and brought with her, as part of her dowry, a chest of Chinese tea. She began serving the tea to her aristocratic friends at Court, and word of the exotic beverage spread quickly.

As an imported luxury, only the wealthy could afford to drink tea. The price of tea was 16-60 shillings a pound, making even the cheapest pound of tea an entire month's wage for the average laborer. As such, tea consumption became highly fashionable and elitist. According to a London magazine in the 1740's, it cost more to maintain a fashionable tea table with tea and accessories than to support 2 children and a nurse. Being able to serve and drink tea with elegance and skill marked social status and indicated good breeding and intellect. Many 18th century English and Dutch paintings commissioned by wealthy families show them having tea.



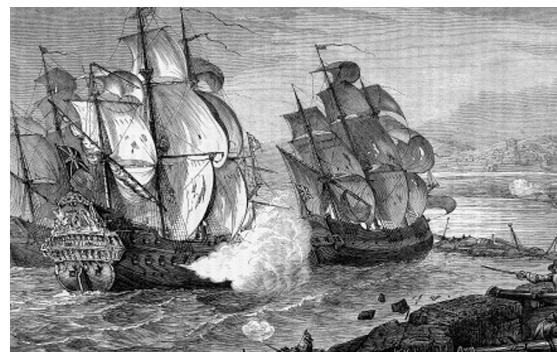
As an imported luxury, only the wealthy could afford to drink tea when it was first brought to Europe.

THE INVENTION OF BLACK TEA

Up until the mid-17th century, all tea produced in China was green tea. However, as foreign trade increased the profit-conscious Chinese growers discovered that they could preserve the leaves by fermenting them in the air and then halting the natural decomposition by baking. This newly-invented "black" tea kept its flavor and aroma longer than traditional, delicate green teas and was better equipped for the long journeys involved in transporting tea into other countries.

THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

In order to keep up with rising demand, the British Royal family chartered the East India Company and granted it a monopoly on all trade throughout Asia, India, Russia, and eastern Africa. With the right to acquire territory, coin money, keep armies and forts, punish lawbreakers, form foreign alliances and declare war, the East India Company became the most powerful monopoly the world has ever known. . . and tea was its primary commodity. The British East India Company changed the world. They claimed Honk Kong, Singapore, and India as British colonies, prompted a global economy and started several wars. All of this for tea!



With the right to acquire territory, coin money, keep armies, punish lawbreakers, form foreign alliances and declare war, the East India company became the most popular monopoly the world has ever known ... and tea was its primary commodity.

THE OPIUM WARS

As tea consumption increased, Britain's exports could not keep up with the demand for tea. . . until they found opium. The West's unquenchable thirst for tea and the unconscionable lengths the British East India Company would go to fulfill this demand resulted in lifetimes of addiction. The illegal opium trade continued until 1839 when a Chinese official drown 20,000 chests of opium in the sea near Canton. A year later, Britain declared war on China and China retaliated by placing a strict embargo on all exports of tea.

ESTABLISHING TEA PLANTATIONS IN INDIA

Even before the Opium Wars began, China was hesitant about trading with the west. Their sense of privacy was so extreme that the Chinese government even considered their national language a state secret. Merchants caught teaching the "foreign devils" their language were punished by death. The difficulties in continuing trade with China forced Britain to explore other alternatives and they began searching for a way to grow their own tea.

India appeared as a promising location for tea plantations due to the favorable climate and high altitudes. Also, explorers had discovered indigenous tea plants growing in Assam in 1823. However, nobody knew how to produce tea once it was picked. It took years of effort, several failed attempts, and, eventually, sending spies sent to Chinese tea plantations to figure it out.

Many Chinese tea plants were relocated to India during this time, and can still be found today in old Darjeeling tea estates. Tea plants native to India taste completely different (they are typically stronger with a malty and sometimes harsh flavor) than the original Chinese teas. Europeans quickly adjusted to the new taste of tea, and began adding milk and sugar as well as other spices such as nutmeg, ginger, and mint, to temper the strong, often bitter brew.

AFTERNOON TEA

Anna, the Duchess of Bedford, is often credited with the invention of afternoon tea in the early 1840's. Traditionally, dinner was not served until 8:30 or 9:00 in the evening and the Duchess often became hungry, especially in the summer when dinner was served even later. She began asking servants to sneak her a pot of tea along with small cakes or light sandwiches, eventually inviting friends to join her. The practice of inviting friends to come for tea in the afternoon was quickly picked up by other social hostesses.

Afternoon tea is also called "low tea" because it was usually taken in a sitting room where low tables (like modern coffee tables) were placed near sofas or chairs. Many people mistakenly refer to afternoon tea as high tea, because they think it sounds more regal and lofty. In actuality, high tea is a full meal served at a regular kitchen table around 6 in the evening, consisting of heavy meats, cheeses, bread and butter and cake. Tea is still served, but it is more of a traditional dinner for the working class rather than a ladies' social diversion.



Europeans quickly adjusted to the new, stronger taste of Indian teas, and began adding milk and sugar as well as other spices such as nutmeg, ginger, and mint, to temper the strong, often bitter brew.



Queen Victoria and Society Ladies

Many people mistakenly refer to afternoon tea as high tea, because they think it sounds more regal and lofty. In actuality, high tea is a full meal served at a regular kitchen table around 6 in the evening, consisting of heavy meats, cheeses, bread and butter and cake.



The Boston Tea Party was the beginning of the War of Independence... and America's preference for coffee.

THE UNITED STATES

By the second half of the 18th century, tea constituted the single largest and most valuable commodity exported by Britain into the United States. The British government ordered a specific tax on tea in order to capitalize off its popularity. In defiance, the American ports refused to allow any dutiable goods ashore. This resulted in the infamous Boston Tea Party, the British government's closure of Boston harbor and the arrival of British troops on American soil. This was the beginning of the War of Independence. . . and America's preference for coffee.

Abstaining from tea became synonymous with patriotism. En route to sign the Declaration of Independence, John Adams wrote to his wife about how he had asked for tea at a tavern: "Is it lawful for a weary traveler to refresh himself with a dish of tea, provided it has been honestly smuggled and has paid no duty?" The employee replied: "No sir! We have renounced tea under this roof. But, if you desire it, I will make you some coffee."

Fortunately, tea is experiencing a new-found popularity in the United States due, in part, to media reports on tea's potent health benefits.

INVENTION OF ICED TEA

The United States is responsible for several major changes in the tea industry. At the St. Louis World Trade Fair in 1904, a group of tea producers organized a special tea pavilion and offered cups of hot tea to all attendees. The sweltering summer temperatures left the booth empty as people went on in search of cold drinks. In an effort to sell their product, the man supervising the booth poured tea into glasses packed with ice cubes. Before long, customers were lining up to try the new beverage. Currently, America consumes almost fifty billion glasses of iced tea in a single year. More than 80% of all tea consumed in the U.S. is served over ice.

INVENTION OF THE TEA BAG

The tea bag is also an American invention. As with many inventions, the discovery of tea bags was accidental.

In 1908, a thrifty New York tea merchant sent samples of his product sealed in silk bags (instead of more expensive tin containers) to restaurants and cafés throughout the city. After some time, he discovered that restaurants were brewing his tea directly in the silk bags to save time. This method of brewing immediately caught on. Paper soon replaced silk, lowering production costs even more.

SACRIFICE: FRESHNESS AND FLAVOR

Unfortunately, however, the convenience provided by tea bags came at a high price: freshness and flavor.

At first, using paper proved difficult; tealeaves didn't have enough room to expand or infuse their full flavor. What was the solution? Smaller leaves. Because the size and shape of the leaf (which was hidden behind a paper bag anyway) no longer mattered, merchants could purvey much cheaper grades of tea known as "fannings" or dust. These are the lowest rankings tea can achieve, found at the bottom of the barrels or (as rumor has it) swept from tea-factory floors.

Also, because tea-dust has a higher surface-to-air ratio, low-grade teabags go stale very quickly-well before they reach grocery-store shelves. Stale tea quickly loses both complexity-of-flavor and antioxidant content.



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This state of tea mediocrity has now plagued the West for several decades. When people think of tea, they typically imagine a flat bleached-paper bag filled with a nondescript black powder. Most supermarkets still offer only a bottom-of-the-barrel tea product, leaving most consumers to believe that there is nothing better available. Most people haven't had the opportunity to experience the amazing varieties of teas that exist and are popular in other parts of the world. This is unfortunate! Especially considering the tremendous variety, complexity of flavor, intoxicating aroma and health benefits found in a cup of whole-leaf gourmet tea.

Fortunately, the popularity of high-quality, whole-leaf tea is on the rise as consumers learn more about the amazing health benefits and stress-relieving properties found in a daily cup.

Due to the prevalence of mass-produced tea bags, when we think of tea, we often imagine a non-descript black powder in a bleached-paper bag. This is unfortunate! Especially considering the tremendous variety, complexity of flavor and health benefits provided by a cup of gourmet tea.

At Octavia Tea, we introduce tea-drinkers to some of the highest quality teas available—redefining how people think about tea.

Below are just a few of the teas we offer:

Ginger Peach
white tea



Genmaicha
green tea



Tropical Green
green tea



French Breakfast
black tea



Calming Chamomile
herbal tea



Vanilla Coconut
black tea



Orange Flower
oolong tea



Jasmine Pearl
green tea



Lemongrass
oolong tea



Grand Earl Grey
black tea



Passion Fruit
red tea



Silver Needle
white tea



Peppermint Spring
green tea



Pomegranate
white tea



Ginger Cinnamon Spice
herbal tea



OUR STORY

THE BEGINNING...

Out of a genuine passion for premium, loose-leaf tea, Octavia Tea was founded in 2002 after our founder spent 2 years traveling around the world (through Europe, Asia, India and Africa) and fell in love with the different types of tea along each stop in her journey.

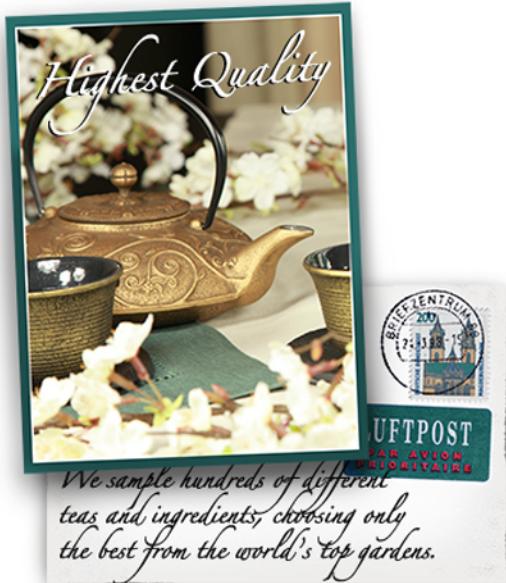
From thick, mint tea in Northern Africa ... steamy, rich, spiced tea in India ... bright, grassy green tea in Japan ... fragrant jasmine tea in China ... sweet apple tea in Turkey ... comforting red tea in South Africa ... exotic yerba maté in Argentina ... fruit and vanilla flavored teas in Europe ... our founder was amazed by the quality, variety and the importance tea has on different cultures around the world.

Unable to purchase her favorite teas once back at home in Chicago (in a country that focuses on coffee where mass-produced tea bags are the standard), she began a small tea-importing hobby ... that soon evolved into a full-time business.

Today, Octavia Tea imports and blends over 60 different teas, and the list is constantly evolving. Our main business is wholesale; we sell primarily to gourmet grocery stores, gift shops, spas, restaurants, tea shops and coffee shops around the country.

OUR MISSION

From traditional favorites to whimsical, imaginative blends, our mission is to bring you the freshest, purest, healthiest, best-tasting teas on earth and delight every palate from the first-time tea-drinker to the discerning connoisseur. We take pride in using only the finest natural and organic ingredients and are a socially and environmentally conscious company.



GOURMET QUALITY

Octavia Tea has set the standard for quality. In order to bring you the freshest, best-tasting teas on earth, we sample hundreds of different teas and ingredients, choosing only the best from the world's top gardens. Each tea, spice, herb, flower, essential oil and flavor essence is hand-selected based on our rigorous demands for health benefits, freshness, flavor, quality and purity. Each blend is handcrafted in small batches to ensure that you get the freshest product possible.

Not all teas are created equal. There is an enormous disparity in flavor between different grades of tea. Even teas that share the same name have drastically different appearances and flavor profiles when produced at different gardens and sold by different tea purveyors. Our biggest compliment is when customers tell us they can't go back to their old brand after trying the teas we offer. We work hard to bring you the absolute best of the best.

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GUIDE TO TEA

NATURAL & ORGANIC

We carefully source and offer only 100% natural and Certified Organic Teas. This means that we do not use any artificial ingredients and carefully monitor our products to ensure they are grown in pristine environments free from toxic chemicals, such as synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides or herbicides. Organic teas follow intensive quality and safety regulations and may contain more nutrients and antioxidants because of biologically active, fertile and healthier soil.

Focusing on natural and certified organic ingredients is especially important when it comes to tea because we steep the leaves themselves directly in hot water. We don't want a pesticide-ridden, toxin-filled cocktail!

Also, because most teas are cultivated in 3rd world countries where pesticides are poorly regulated, buying natural and organic is not only better for our health, it also ensures the safety and well-being of people living and working on the gardens.

Although artificial flavors are much cheaper to use and widespread in the tea industry, we are one of the few tea companies that use only use natural flavor essences and pure essential oils to enhance our blends.

We believe that our commitment to natural and certified organic products has an enormous impact on taste, quality, our well-being and the health of the environment.

Our teas are made using only high-quality natural and certified organic ingredients. Our blended and aromatized teas are made with fruits, flowers, herbs, spices, pure essential oils and natural flavor essences.

We do not use any artificial ingredients or flavors.

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Octavia Tea is a socially and environmentally responsible company. We are proud to support gardens that encourage the conservation of the environment through sustainable natural and organic farming methods. Nearly all of our teas are either Certified Organic or made with organic ingredients. We also offer a selection of Fair Trade Certified teas.



OUR TEAS

At Octavia Tea, we like to think of tea as an escape from the ordinary - where you can find peace, restore energy, awaken the senses, enjoy conversation among friends or simply take time for yourself. Every tea has a unique flavor and style that reflects its origin, varietal, vintage and artisanal method of manufacture. We urge customers to appreciate loose-leaf tea as though it were a fine wine.

We offer traditional, world-famous, single-estate teas that have been harvested using 1,000-year-old techniques, as well as imaginative blends enhanced with fruits, flowers, spices, natural flavor essences and pure essential oils. We even have a tea that tastes like a chocolate mint dessert!

Because everyone has different taste preferences, we offer a wide selection of teas to suit every palette and mood. All of our teas are available in 3 sizes: samples (so you can try it first), signature tins (our most popular size) and bulk by-the-pound (so you can save money on your favorite teas).



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AFFORDABILITY

Fortunately, premium, gourmet tea is one of those rare, affordable luxuries. With an average of 150 tablespoons-per-pound*, even an extremely high-quality tea that costs \$70.00/lb breaks down to less than \$0.50 for a strong, generous cup. High-quality tea can be re-steeped multiple times to offer even more savings.

Because we are primarily wholesalers and sell our teas to businesses and other tea companies, we bring in large quantities of tea and maintain very competitive pricing. We source teas direct from origin and create our own custom blends. Our long-term relationship with our suppliers and growers ensures that we get exceptional prices for the quality of our products. Due to our unique position in the industry, we are proud to offer some of the highest-quality, best-tasting, natural and organic teas in the world at affordable prices.

Octavia Tea is a certified organic and fair trade business!

