



Unit III - Topic 4

Tea types

TEA

Tea or cha is an aromatic beverage prepared by pouring hot or boiling water over cured or fresh leaves of *Camellia sinensis*, an evergreen shrub native to East Asia which probably originated in the borderlands of southwestern China and northern Myanmar. Tea is also rarely made from the leaves of *Camellia taliensis*.

TYPES OF TEA

Basic varieties

All tea comes from only one plant called *Camellia sinensis*. However, based on the type of tea leaves picked and the level of oxidation or processing, tea is classified into five main types: Black, Green, Oolong, White, and Pu-erh.

Black tea

Black tea is the most common type of tea accounting for up to 85% of total tea consumption in the western world. Black tea is fully oxidized and has a darker appearance, stronger flavour, and higher caffeine content compared to other teas. The caffeine content in black tea is still around half the level of coffee. Often black teas can be consumed with sugar, milk, or lemon and offer some of the same health benefits as other teas.

Green tea

Green tea is 'unoxidized' tea. The leaves are heated soon after picking in order to destroy the enzymes that cause oxidation. This type of processing preserves a high level of antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals accounting for the various health benefits of green tea. The infusion is pale greenish-yellow in color and tastes light and grassy. It is best consumed without any additives, although some people may prefer to add lemon or a sweetener but not milk.

Oolong tea



Oolong tea is semi-oxidized, so the leaf is allowed to sit for maybe 2-4 hours, before being heated up to halt oxidization. The amount of oxidation affects the flavour and appearance of the tea. Longer oxidization results in a darker oolong which is more similar in taste to a black tea, while shorter oxidization makes it more similar in nature to green tea. When steeped, Oolong tea produces golden or light brown tea with a very delicate flavour resembling neither black nor green tea.

White tea

White tea is the least processed of all teas. Only the unopened buds and young leaves covered in silver fuzz are used, and they are merely withered and dried. White tea produces a very light-colored infusion with a mild flavour. Its caffeine content is even lower than that of green tea and is considered to have a very high level of antioxidants. White tea is best consumed without any additives at all.

Pu-erh tea

Pu-erh tea is a special type of tea that comes from the Yunan province of China and is known for its earthy flavour. It is made out of tea plucked from wild tea trees rather than cultivated bushes and the leaves go through microbial fermentation by pressing the raw leaves together and then storing them for maturity. Pu-erh tea can be either black or green depending on the level of oxidation allowed in the process. Although we don't stock any Pu-erh tea on its own, our Coffee Truffle tea has Pu-erh tea as the base onto which we have added coffee beans and cocoa pieces to give it a rich coffee chocolate flavour.

Flavoured tea

Flavoured teas are created by adding flowers, herbs, fruits, and other natural flavours to black, green, or oolong teas. Some of the more common types of flavoured teas include:



Earl Grey is the most popular flavoured tea in Britain. It is prepared by adding an extract of bergamot, citrus fruit to black tea. It was created in the 1800s to mask the flavour of cheap tea and to pass it off as expensive tea. Although many supermarket shelves are still filled with cheaper varieties, it is now possible to buy premium Earl Grey which has been created by infusing the finest blend of black tea with the best Italian bergamot.



Jasmine tea is tea infused with the aroma of jasmine blossoms. It is the most popular scented tea in China. It is usually made with green tea, but white, oolong, and black teas are also used. The method of infusing the scent of jasmine flowers into the tea is very laborious and takes several days. The tea is stored with the flowers in a special room with controlled humidity. This is done at night as that is when the jasmine flowers bloom. The process is repeated over several nights to get the right level of scent.



Masala Chai is black tea mixed with traditional Indian spices like cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, and ginger. It is usually prepared by boiling water and milk along with tea and spices and sweetened with sugar. It is the most popular way of drinking tea in India. However, this wasn't always the case. When tea was first grown in India, it was not a popular beverage among the locals. Hence some Indian vendors began adding it to a local drink called 'kadha' which was water and milk boiled with spices. This is how Masala chai or Chai tea as it is known in Britain was born!



Other flavoured teas: The world of flavoured tea is limited only to the imagination of tea blenders. Some of the more creative examples of flavoured teas include our Divine Elixir which is a blend of green and white tea with lychee and peach flavours or our Lemon Ginger tea which is black tea with natural dried pineapple, lemongrass, ginger pieces, calendula, and sunflower petals.



Herbal infusions (Tisanes)

In addition to the above, herbal infusions from other plants are also sometimes referred to as tea, although not to the purists. The correct term for any non-tea beverage is **tisane** or just herbal infusion. Examples include chamomile, peppermint, rooibos, etc.



Fruit teas are made from natural unprocessed fruits. They are naturally sweet but do not have the overpowering sweetness of sugar. Fruit teas are high in antioxidants and vitamin C and do not contain any caffeine, making them ideal for drinking before going to bed. They can also be drunk as iced tea, making them a healthy alternative to fizzy drinks and even some fruit juices.

Some examples of fruit teas that you can find in our shop include Moringa Passion Fruit which contains apple bits, raisins, carrots, beetroot, candied pineapple, candied papaya, natural flavouring, moringa leaves & lemon peel; and Golden Pear which contains dried apple, pear, rose blossoms, vanilla pieces, and natural flavours.



Flower teas: In addition to their wonderful aroma and natural beauty, a lot of flowers have therapeutic properties and calming effect.

One of the most common herbal tea made out of flowers is Camomile tea which is made of dried camomile flowers and is proven to be an effective antioxidant. Another example is the Blue Butterfly Pea Flowers made of gorgeous blue flowers are grown in Thailand and are full of antioxidants (anthocyanin). Adding a few drops of lime juice to this tisane turns the blue into a beautiful purple.





Leaf teas: Leaves of some non-tea plants make excellent herbal tea.

Examples include Yerba Mate which is made from the leaves of the holly tree of the South American rain-forests and one of the few herbal teas that have the caffeine content of Arabica coffee. Another very popular herbal tea made out of non-tea leaves is Rooibos tea. Grown exclusively in South Africa, the leaves of the Rooibos plant turn red after processing and is caffeine-free.