

# TEA

# 101



The Daily Tea

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# IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT TEA APP

LIKE ANY GOOD COMPANION, A TEA APP SHOULD BE FRIENDLY, SMART, TIMELY AND ATTRACTIVE. IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE PERFECT APP TO ENHANCE YOUR TEA ADVENTURES, CHECK OUT SOME OF TODAY'S MOST POPULAR PICKS

## TEA APPS FOR APPLE PRODUCTS

**TEA FOR IPHONE** Tea for iPhone is packed with features- a timer with brewing suggestions for various tea types, a Tea Encyclopedia to learn about teas from all over the world, functionality that enables users to share tasting notes & photos with friends on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, plus plenty of ways to customize your preferences.

**SIMPLICITEA** True to its name, SimpliciTEA is a simple solution for brewing tea. Choose the tea you're brewing and simply watch and listen to the animated water boil as the timer counts down to the perfectly brewed cup.

**TEALY** With Tealy, you can keep track of the teas you've been drinking recently – along with your ratings, tasting notes and pictures- and share them with others. You can also geotag posts to track your favorite teahouses and discover new and interesting blends. Share your tea with friends on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Foursquare.

## TEA APPS FOR ANDROIDS

**TEA TIME!** A great basic tea app, Tea Time! has a brewing timer along with a feature that lets you add, edit and delete teas and tea categories with individual brewing instructions for each. As a free app there are some advertisements to deal with, but you can remove them with a small upgrade.

**TEA CUP** Beautiful and simple, Tea Cup lets you choose from 30 time presets for some of the most popular teas, or you can customize your own. The timer has an alarm, and you can keep statistics for your weekly, daily and total number of teas consumed.

**PERFECT BREW TEA TIMER** A fun and stylish tea timer, Perfect Brew Tea Timer uses animation, steeping and steam effects to enhance your tea time. Teas are cataloged with a brief description, history and health benefits. Brewing suggestions include steep temperature, time and quantity for both loose tea and tea bags, or you can customize the app with your own preferences.

Photo by Ed Yourdon/Flickr CC

# BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO TEA TYPES

## THE BASICS

- All tea comes from one plant- *Camellia sinensis*. Put simply, if it's not *Camellia sinensis*, then it's not tea!
- There are only 5 main types of tea- all others are just variations
- The level of oxidation determines tea type

## OOLONGS AND JIN FO AND CHAI- OH MY!

Whether you're new to tea or not, staring at a long list of exotic but unfamiliar tea choices can feel a bit intimidating. If your search for the perfect cup has ever been stalled as you agonize over names like Lavender Dreams White, Dragonwell or Golden Monkey, our Beginner's Guide to Tea Types is the perfect place to start your tea adventure.

The names of teas are usually related to either the region in which they were grown, or in the case of blends, the name is meant to describe the overall taste experience. The good news is, it's easy to get a sense of any tea- regardless of its name- once you understand the 5 types of tea.



## CAMELLIA SINENSIS

All tea is made from *Camellia sinensis*, an evergreen plant that is indigenous to China and India, but is cultivated throughout the world. So whether you're sipping a black, green, white, oolong or pu-her, each is made from the same leaves.

Infusions made from other types of plants are called tisanes (herbal teas); they have very different chemical components, flavors, uses and health benefits- so they're not considered true teas.



## THE 5 TYPES OF TEA

There are only 5 main types of teas, classified by oxidation levels. Oxidation is a chemical reaction. Oxidation takes place when tea leaves react with oxygen in the air, changing the taste, aroma and appearance of the leaves. White and green teas are unoxidized, oolongs are partially oxidized, and black and pu-ehr's are fully oxidized. As a rule of thumb, less oxidized teas are lighter in color and flavor, whereas highly oxidized teas are darker in color and bolder in flavor.

**WHITE TEA-** White tea is made from unoxidized leaf buds, and is the least processed of all teas.

**GREEN TEA-** Green tea is made from leaves that have been allowed to wither slightly after being picked. Oxidation is then stopped very quickly through rapid heating.

**OOLONG TEA-** Oolong tea is made from partially oxidized leaves. The leaves are tossed in bamboo baskets to lightly bruise the edges so that the outer part of the leaf is oxidized while the center is left green.

**BLACK TEA-** Black tea is made from fully oxidized tea leaves. The leaves are first withered, then rolled to expose the leaf's oils and maximize oxidation.

**PU-EHR TEA-** Pu-ehr tea made from fully oxidized leaves that are then aged, sometimes for 50 years or more.

So that's the basics. To be sure, there are thousands of other things that effect the flavors, aromas, health benefits, caffeine levels and quality of each variety, but all teas fall into one of the 5 categories. Choosing your perfect cup begins with knowing the 5 types of tea. Once you do, you'll enjoy delving into each category and discovering the thousands of amazing varieties within each.

# HOW MUCH IS YOUR TONGUE WORTH?

With more than twice the average number of taste buds, “supertasters” experience flavors much more intensely than most. Sugar tastes sweeter and bitter flavors are sharper. Although the genetic trait is common, affecting about 1 in 4, only a few will join the ranks of professional tasters like Tetley’s top tea blender, Sebastian Michaelis who can taste and grade any of 1500 different tea varieties in just 15 seconds with complete accuracy- a skill so valuable that his tongue has been insured for \$1.5 million.

What makes the tongue of a professional taster so unique? As it turns out, it takes a lot more than genetics. Top tea tasters undergo several years of intense training to develop the precise palate skills and expertise needed to discern minute differences in flavor. The ability to quickly identify the country, region, and even the estate from which a single batch of tea originated is essential, as well as the skill to artfully blend the leaves to achieve a consistent cup.

Ironically, tasting talent is often found in people with little interest in food. Sebastian Michaelis did not start out to be a tea blender or taster. After graduating with a degree in philosophy, he answered an advertisement for a trainee tea tester- the initial requirements being a willingness to “travel the world and drink tea”, which he thought sounded nice. He was not a “foodie” by any means, and he had no

special interest or knowledge of tea. Still, Tetley selected him from hundreds of heavily screened applicants to begin a five year intensive training program, learning every aspect of tea tasting, growing,

*Approximately one quarter of the population are considered “Supertasters”, but among those, few have a palate as refined as Sebastian Michaelis- Tetley’s master tea blender- whose tongue is insured for \$1.5 million*

manufacturing and marketing. Today he and nine others are part of an elite tasting team at Tetley, entrusted with the tea company’s legacy and a top secret recipe so valuable the team members are not even permitted to fly on the same plane together.



So how much is your tongue worth? If you’re a supertaster by birth, with a willingness to train rigorously for several years and you have a bit of luck, the answer may be “plenty”!

Photo by Charles Chan/ Flickr CC

# INFUSION CONFUSION: BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO TEA INFUSERS & STRAINERS

*Fancy or Functional, Chic or Silly- there's a Tea Infuser for Everyone-  
But how do you Choose the Right One?*

In spite of the huge variety of shapes, sizes and materials, tea infusers & strainers perform essentially the same function as tea bags- but they do it better, and with a whole lot more style. If you've ever been stumped by the odd assortment of tea gadgets on the market, don't worry- once you know the basics you'll be able to choose a steeping tool that fits your tea lifestyle.

Infusers, strainers and filters are all designed to hold dried tea leaves in place for steeping, and neatly remove them when they're done. But since each type has its own advantages, the "best" tool depends on what you're trying to do. Are you making a single serving, or enough to share? What is the size of the leaf? Are you preparing a leisurely cup or one for the road? Are you using a teapot or infusing the leaves in a mug? No matter what the circumstance, there's an efficient tool to do the job.



Why bother with an infuser? Steeping draws out the essential oils locked in tea leaves. In order for the flavors, aromas and healthful compounds to fully develop, tea leaves need plenty of space to unfold, exposing as much surface area as possible. Infusers and strainers are designed to make the most of high quality leaves. Paper filters generally work well, but create a more confined space for the leaves.

## HOW TO CHOOSE THE PERFECT INFUSER

**Quantity of Tea-** Infusers, strainers and filters come in many sizes. The standard quantity of leaf per cup of tea is about one teaspoon. Consider the amount of tea you'll be making when you choose a size.

**Size of Leaves-** Any type of infuser, strainer or filter can be used with larger leaves, but very small leaves can escape from a steeping tool that has large holes. Mesh or paper filters are best for smaller leaves.

**Functionality-** Think about the practical aspects. At home, you can invest in a few infusers to be used on a daily basis and enjoyed for many years. Commuters and travelers will love the many new travel mugs with built-in infusers. And for convenience, paper filters are inexpensive, easy to store or take along to the office, and can be thrown away after use.

**Vessel-** Do you like to brew your tea in a cup or mug, or do you prefer a teapot? Small strainers fit over the rim of your cup, and many mugs are fitted with infusers and lids for steeping. If you prefer a teapot, you can steep the loose tea in the teapot, and pour the tea over a strainer into the cup to catch the leaves.

**Material-** Fine metal mesh works great with all sorts of tea, clean up is a breeze and you can expect years of use. Tea balls made of metal are also durable and easy to maintain, but the larger holes make them most suitable for larger-leaf varieties. Paper filters are once-and-done, and can be used with any type of tea. Some novelty infusers made of silicone can be harder to clean, but the fun factor might make it worth it.

**Style-** There are many hundreds of sizes, shapes and materials for infusion. From sleek to classic, chic to functional, there's a steeping tool for every enthusiast and every situation.

Photo by John Lambert Jones/Flickr CC



# GETTING STARTED WITH LOOSE LEAF TEA

By *Nicole Martin*

Many of you DailyTea drinkers have your tea routine down pat. You know what you like and how you wish to prepare it. For those who are new to tea or want to gain more tea knowledge, here is a loose leaf tea rundown.

Getting started with loose leaf tea can seem like a daunting task. The good news is that a few basic tools are all you really need to make a great cuppa at home. Before you consider your equipment, make sure to use freshly boiled spring or filtered water.

Microwaving your water can make the taste flat and bland because it rapidly removes oxygen from the water.

## Control The Temperature

Black teas and pu-erh can usually be made with boiling water but for other teas you'll need to control the temperature. Variable temperature tea kettles are widely available but you can also do things the old fashioned way. Many tea retailers sell thermometers that are specifically made for tea but any kitchen thermometer will do the trick as well.

## Hold Your Leaves

In addition to temperature you'll also need to be careful about how long the tea leaves are allowed to steep. There are a lot of different tools available to hold your tea leaves while brewing. When shopping there are two important things to keep in mind, avoiding plastic and making sure that your leaves have room to expand.

If the tea can't stretch its legs, you'll be missing out on flavor. Plastic pieces that come into contact with the tea should be avoided because they can add unpleasant tastes. Metal is also much easier to keep clean over time.

Traditionally styled tea balls can be too restricting for all but the tiniest of leaves. Basket style infusers are usually my go to when I'm only brewing one cup. Making your own tea bags will do in a pinch, especially while traveling, with easy to fill tea filters.

## Sip in Style

This is your chance to really show off your personality. Whether its a pretty vintage teacup or a big mug displaying your love for Dr. Who, what you sip your brew out of is entirely up to you. Some tea drinkers prefer glass or plain white porcelain so that they can better appreciate the color of their tea. Thicker walled cups will keep your tea hot for longer so they work well for multi-tasking.

Once you've got the hang of things, try branching out into more traditional methods of brewing. Gaiwans, yixing teapots, kyusu and other vessels can add another layer of appreciation to your tea drinking.





# JULIA CHILD'S FAVORITE TEAS

By Mark T. Wendell Tea Company

One of America's best-loved chefs, Julia Child was as well known for her culinary skills as for her lively and endearing personality. Determined to make serious cooking accessible and appealing for home cooks, Julia filmed many episodes of her



Kitchen image by F Deventhal Usage license - CC BY 2.0

Describing her tea tins, the Smithsonian wrote:

*The butcher block top of the lower cabinet next to the garland- and the cabinet above it-held quite a number of tea tins. ] A well-used, matched set of them came from Mark T. Wendell, a Boston Tea Company, which Julia and Paul had learned to favor in Ceylon during World War II. They continued to drink these teas over the next 50 years.*

popular television series in her own cheerful kitchen in Cambridge, Massachusetts. As she whisked, chopped and chattered her way through ambitious French recipes, Julia could be seen in her own comfortable space, surrounded by a well-worn collection of tools and ingredients she used regularly throughout her legendary career.

A peek into her actual kitchen, now permanently displayed in the Smithsonian, offers a fascinating glimpse of the legendary cook. As unpretentious as Julia herself, the kitchen is both serious and homey, carefully designed by Julia and her husband Paul to accommodate her 6'2" frame, her precise culinary requirements and her favorite colors. The counters were raised, the outlines of her saucepans were traced onto pegboard-covered walls to ensure that each was returned to its proper place, and her favorite utensils and ingredients were kept close at hand on counters and shelves.

What kind of tea did Julia favor? Above the butcher block counter in her kitchen, readily seen in many of the television episodes, were a few of her favorites:

### CHINA KEEMUN

A full-bodied, yet mellow black tea with a lively bouquet. Keemun is renowned as one of China's finest black teas, superbly crafted with tippy leaves and an aromatic sweetness. When brewed, it produces a dark red cup and makes a great iced tea.

### CHINA JASMINE

A lightly fermented pouchong tea, gently touched with freshly picked jasmine blossoms from the Huang Mountain area of China. After repeated exposure to the tea leaves, the flowers are removed, leaving the exotically fragrant aroma behind. China Jasmine makes a sweet and easy drinking brew.

### LAPSANG SOUCHONG

This rare, long leaf tea gains its distinctive "tarry" flavor and smoky tang from the pine fires over which it is dried. Rich in taste and smoky aroma, it produces a deep red liquor when brewed. China Lapsang Souchong has a smokier taste and aroma than Hu-Kwa Formosan Lapsang Souchong tea.

### CHEERICUP CEYLON

This whole leaf Ceylon is a strong tea with a full, almost brisk flavor. Cheericut Ceylon is a unique blend of seven high and low grown estate teas from the island country of Sri Lanka. When brewed, the bright and sparkling liquor has a sweet and distinct taste that makes for the perfect afternoon tea.

### HU-KWA TEA

This long leaf, delicately smoked Lapsang Souchong tea from the island of Formosa has long been a tea connoisseur's favorite. HU-KWA gains its distinctive flavor and smoky tang from the pine fires over which it is dried, and is considered the benchmark for Chinese Lapsang Souchong tea.



# TEA TUTORIAL: GAIWANS

By Nicole Martin

A gaiwan is a special lidded bowl that is used for brewing tea. Invented during the Ming dynasty, the design has not changed much over time. It consists of a saucer, a small cup with a flared lip and a lid. The most common material is porcelain but you can also find gaiwans that are made out of glass or clay.

A large amount of leaves and a small amount of water is used to achieve concentrated flavor and aroma. Rather than brewing for 3 to 5 minutes like you would in a tea pot, the infusion time for a gaiwan can be as short as 15 seconds. The brewed tea is then poured into a cup or serving vessel, using the lid as a strainer to keep the leaves inside the bowl. Many tea connoisseurs enjoy sniffing the lid after each infusion to see what aromas they're able to find in the tea.

Pouring tea with a gaiwan can be very tricky for the uninitiated. The basic idea is to hold the gaiwan from the rim and the button on top of the lid. I recommend practicing with cool water first so that you can get the technique down without risking burning yourself. It also takes some time and practice for your fingers to become accustomed to the heat. There are many methods for pouring but it's important to do what works best for you.

first so that you can get the technique down without risking burning yourself. It also takes some time and practice for your fingers to become accustomed to the heat. There are many methods for pouring but it's important to do what works best for you.



have fairly long fingers so I have no problem gripping the very top rim of the gaiwan. Others with small hands may want to use the saucer as a means to grasp the gaiwan in a safer, more comfortable way. The positioning of your lid will help you to control the water temperature, if needed. Pu-erh loves heat so you'll want to close the lid all the way. Green teas are easily scalded so it can help to leave an opening for steam to escape.

If you ask five tea drinkers what teas work best in a gaiwan you are likely to get five different answers. In my experience oolongs, black tea and pu-erh all perform very well. A high quality tea can be brewed upwards of ten times. White and green teas can be a bit more delicate so use your judgment. Chinese and Taiwanese teas tend to work best in gaiwans but I've had success brewing everything from Darjeeling to American grown white tea.



## THE BEAUTY OF BLOOMING TEAS

BY DIANE COONEY

Looking for a beautiful gift idea or a tea for your next special occasion? Blooming teas are both a visual and culinary delight! There are several variations of blooming teas, which begin with a base of green, black or oolong tea. The tea leaves and flowers are sorted and weighed to create consistently sized rosettes. Some bundles are made by the trained artisans stitching together tea leaves or tea buds with cotton thread, others are made adding edible flowers.

Adding complexity to the aroma and enhancing tea color, the flowers used may include jasmine, tiger lily (*Lilium lancifolium*), globe amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa*), chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum* spp), hibiscus (*Hibiscus* L.) and osmanthus (*Osmanthus fragrans*). Finished teas are often green or yellow, with a mild flavor and a touch of sweetness.

Flowers are carefully dehydrated prior to their assembly. Artisans take anywhere from one minute to thirty to create one blooming tea. Once assembled, the teas are dried and fired, similar to the process used to create other types of tea.

The stitching technique of the artisan influences the final shape of each blossom. Extra space is left between the various components of the tea bud, leaving room for hot air which helps open up the bud.

When brewed, the heat of the water inflates the flower so it expands as it steeps. A glass teapot serves as the ideal container, allowing you to watch the show as the tea blossom, often revealing a flower as the centerpiece. A large white teapot is a nice alternative if you don't have a glass one. Watching the bud "bloom" creates a relaxing experience that should be savored.

Blooming teas became readily available in the 1980s; however, there are stories that this art has ancient origins. One theory is that the teas were developed during the Song dynasty for the emperor. This lovely style of tea is also mentioned throughout Chinese literature. Old folk stories and poetry inspire elaborate designs.

Whatever the theories, these teas were most recently created in the Yunnan province of China, but this would make an excellent do it yourself project by adapting the type of flowers included, and picking things such as American elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), English marigold, (*Calendula officinalis*), anise hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*) or Black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) [note: use only its flowers]. A more savory concoction could be created with flowers from herbs such as basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), or chicory (*Cichorium intybus*). Flowering teas are designed to provide several servings, so they make a great choice for a tea party, book club, or intimate family gathering. You can find blooming teas at local specialty tea shops.

If you are interested in purchasing online, find a reputable tea company, since there are instances of the inferior blooming teas being created just for show, rather than having both exquisite visuals and superb flavors. The teas are packaged individually, so they remain intact during shipping.

Photo courtesy of Janis Marshall

# FIND THE RIGHT TEA TO SOOTHE BODY AND SOUL

BY MONICA BHIDE



*Find the right tea to soothe yourself, body and soul.*

As the legendary eighth-century tea master Lu Yu, author of *The Classic of Tea*, put it: “Tea tempers the spirit and harmonizes the mind, dispels lassitude and relieves fatigue, awakens thought and prevents drowsiness.” Modern-day tea aficionados agree. “In the midst of the rush of everything that can happen in a day, taking the time to drink a cup of tea is a delight for both the mind and the body,” says Aurélie Bessière, head of the US branch of the Parisian tea school *Le Palais des Thés*.

Tea brewed from the dried and sometimes fermented leaves of *Camellia sinensis* contains polyphenols and flavonoids—antioxidants with a beneficial effect on health. Certified tea master Jennifer Goldin says epigallocatechin gallate, an antioxidant found in white, green, oolong, and black teas, is 100 times as effective as vitamin C and 25 times as effective as vitamin E in fighting free radicals and protecting healthy

cells from damage. Goldin points to research from Pace University that suggests tea can even fight viruses and bacteria and help prevent diarrhea, pneumonia, cystitis, and skin infections.

Similarly, tisanes (infusions of flowers, herbs, spices, or twigs) can also augment a healthy lifestyle. “People have been brewing up fragrant pots of herbs in hot water since prehistoric times, expanding on their knowledge of flavors and medicinal qualities over the years,” says Sharon Palmer, a registered dietitian and author of *The Plant-Powered Diet*. “And now scientists are discovering that herbal teas—made from plants as diverse as hibiscus, chamomile, and mint—possess significant antimicrobial, antiviral, antioxidant, and antitumor actions that may protect us from disease.”

Health considerations aside, what should you sip when you need a pick-me-up or just want to relax? Some of the country's top tea experts offer their suggestions.

### REJUVENATE

Jennie Ripps, founder of The Teaologist, a custom blender, suggests white teas for an extra boost. "White teas are slightly higher in caffeine than green teas but low enough to allow you to sip without the jitters," she says. If you want more punch, Ripps advises adding vanilla or chai spices (ginger, cardamom, cloves) to white tea.

### RELAX

A calming tisane can be the perfect way to relax mind and body. Ripps's favorite calming blends are chamomile with lavender (both flowers promote relaxation) and rooibos with lemongrass—it will soothe you, she says, but won't make you sleepy.

### ENERGIZE

To get your body going, try black tea with chai spices, says Ripps, since those are naturally energizing. Tea master Goldin agrees, adding that black tea contains the amino acid L-theanine. "This amino acid boosts alpha brain waves that promote relaxed states of concentration and can boost energy without increased stress levels." Try adding cinnamon to boost your metabolism, cayenne pepper to heighten energy (and cleanse the body), dandelion to stimulate bile production, nettles to increase detoxification, and wild alfalfa to alkalize food residues in the body. All of these, says Goldin, reduce the malaise-inducing effects of inefficient bodily functions.

### EASE DIGESTION

Of course, the health benefits of teas and tisanes depend on what is brewed. For instance, Goldin says, gingerroot, brewed by itself or with your tea, can soothe an upset stomach, and brewing mint will help digestion.

For centuries, people have been drinking tea and deriving its benefits for mind, body, and spirit. "It's a healthy habit. Kick the bottle—the soda and sweetened beverage bottle, that is—and drink tea all year long," says Palmer.—MONICA BHIDE

### A TEA RITUAL

Tea rituals are essentially active meditations, says Corinne Trang, author of *The Asian Flavors Diabetes Cookbook*. Here she offers a simple practice to help you create your own tea ritual. "I offer a warm cup of tea to anyone who visits. It is my way of saying welcome," she says.

Start with warming the teapot and teacups with hot water. Pour out the water.

Add a heaping teaspoon of loose tea leaves to the teapot followed by hot water.

Steep the tea for no more than two minutes before pouring it into cups. A quality tea need not be steeped too long to become flavorful.

Pour the tea into your guest's cup before your own.

Throughout the process, set a positive intention directly related to the person visiting. In your mind, quietly wish your guest the best in whatever he or she happens to be experiencing at the moment.



# READING TEA LEAVES

The ancient art of Tasseography- reading tea leaves- may not be scientific, but does that mean there is nothing to be learned?

Tea-leaf reading is a fun way to enjoy the last few drops at the bottom of your cup. If you are inclined toward fortune-telling, the spent tea leaves may give you a glimpse into the future. But even the more practical-minded can get some benefit; the way your mind interprets the abstract shapes provides some clues about your inner-most thoughts!

Reading your own tea leaves is a simple thing to do. Here are some basic tips to help you get started:

## TIPS FOR READING TEA LEAVES

- Any tea can be used, but loose leaf tea is preferred
- If using a tea bag, cut it open
- Choose a light colored or white tea cup for easy contrast
- Keep it simple- your own intuition is the best guide for interpretation
- Have fun!



## PREPARING THE TEA LEAVES

- Make a cup of tea without using an infuser (any tea will do)
- Enjoy drinking your cup of tea until there is a very small amount left
- Relax your mind and allow your thoughts to float away
- Swirl the cup three times, allowing the tea leaves to cling to the lower walls of the cup
- Turn the cup over briefly to drain

The leaf clumps at the bottom of your cup are what you will read. What patterns, symbols and shapes do you see? Which is most prominent? Do the shapes have symbolic meaning for you? There is no right or wrong answer- the interpretation is up to you!

Photo by Canopic/ Flickr CC