



Why Drink Tea?

While tea is the most consumed beverage in the world, next to water, here in the United States, 80% of tea consumption is in form of iced tea and the rest is in form of the convenient, but lower quality tea bags sold in many stores. The quality and variety of teas can best be compared to that of wines. Like wine, tea comes from a single plant: *Camellia Sinensis*, which is cultivated and processed in many different regions Asia and a few other countries. Climate, elevation, soil, are all factors that determine the color, aroma and taste of tea. Harvest and manufacture require a lot of care and the more skill that is used in the processing, the more rewarding the tea experience.

What makes tea such a distinguished drink?

First there is the taste – even though derived from a single plant, the variations in harvest times and practices as well as processing methods yield a wide array of colors and flavor. Tea prepared properly can be very pleasing. Orthodox teas cover a wide spectrum, from the subtle tastes of white teas, the smoky scents of Lapsong Souchong, or the flowery taste of a skillfully scented jasmine tea. Then, there are blends and scrumptious flavored teas such as Chocolate Truffle, Wild Cherry or Almond Brittle. To create the wonderful aromas, flavored teas are often mixed with botanicals or fruit, and some are naturally caffeine free. Best of all, tea has no calories and can be enjoyed without sugar or sweetened to your taste.

Second, tea is experiencing growing popularity because Western societies are relearning what Eastern cultures have known for thousands of years – tea is good for your health! Tea contains compounds that have been shown to have beneficial affects on the body. For example, researchers have found that tea contains flavonoids, naturally occurring compounds with antioxidant properties. Tea may also play a role in bone health, as the findings of a recent study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, indicate. There are more benefits being discovered every week.

Lastly, is the tea experience itself. Tea whether iced or warm must be prepared with care. Tea cannot be rushed; the steeping process must be allowed to run its course. Complete ceremonies have been created around the preparations and serving of tea, but even without an elaborate procedure, the simple ritual of infusing the tea leaves and watching them unfold and release their magic, is an opportunity to slow down, relax and live in the moment.

Try it yourself – with a good quality tea, prepared properly, you too will understand the reasons for tea's popularity.

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