

The following is a reprint of an article from Mansfield Magazine, November/December 2006, Volume 1, Issue 1, written by Randy Weston

In The Leaves

THE POPULARITY OF TEA IS BREWING THROUGHOUT AMERICA

By Randy Weston

Don't bag the tea. The centuries-old drink was once relegated to ladies social gatherings and medicinal remedies here in America. But times have changed and tea is becoming less the occasionally-consumed drink of the past and more the everyday refreshing staple of a healthy lifestyle. Americans now drink over 2.25 billion gallons of tea a year - approximately 85% of that over ice.

Worldwide, tea is the second most-consumed beverage. Water will always be first. In the United States, tea is sixth on the list following sodas, coffee, water, beer and milk.

However; tea continues to gain in popularity across all generations from young to old. The increasing popularity of tea is being fueled by a populace that is becoming more educated about tea, the availability of high quality tea and the interest in the health benefits of tea.

Tea Types

Most tea consumed in the U.S is Black tea (87 %). The remaining 12.5% is mainly Green tea with the residual amount (0.5 %) being Oolong.

Most tea can be categorized as Black, Green, Oolong or White. All tea comes from the same plant, *Camellia sinensis*. The various degrees of processing and

the level of oxidation in the leaves, account for the fundamental differences among the four types of tea. Different regions, climate, soils, weather, times of harvest and leaf quality are some of the factors that determine the variations in flavor and appearance among teas of the same type. Black tea is oxidized for up to four hours and Oolong teas are oxidized for up to two to three hours. During oxidation the tea leaves undergo chemical reactions which result in taste and color changes and cause the teas to have specific distinguishing characteristics. Green and White (usually from very tender new leaves) teas are not oxidized, and they most closely resemble the look and chemical makeup of the fresh tea leaf. Oolong tea is midway between Black and Green tea in terms of oxidation and contains characteristics of both Green and Black.

Interestingly, many mistakenly refer to drinks made from herbs (e.g., peppermint, chamomile) as teas. These drinks should be classified as tisanes or herbals. To be called a tea, the drink must be derived from *Camellia sinensis*.

It should also be noted that many of the flavored (leaves have been infused with natural or artificial flavors) or scented (leaves are mixed with fresh flower or plant parts) teas are derived from any of the main types of tea (Black, Green, Oolong or White). An example of a flavored black tea is Raspberry Black. An example of a scented tea is Jasmine Green, which derives its scent from Jasmine blossoms. Many of the flavored teas are superb as iced teas.

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Much of the world's tea is grown in areas with well-drained soils at higher elevations where the rainfall is plentiful, the days are warm and the nights are cool. Leading tea-producing countries are Argentina, China, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Japan.

Tea is a quenching beverage which contains no sodium or fat and is virtually calorie-free. Tea also contains flavonoids, naturally occurring substances that are believed to have antioxidant properties. Antioxidants work to neutralize free radicals, which are believed to damage cells and tissues in the body and contribute to chronic disease.

Is it tea time?



Randy Weston, and his wife Sue, are co-owners of Weston Gardens. The store specializes in native and acclimated plants for Texas and has beautiful, historical demonstration gardens. Weston Gardens currently sells over 100 different teas. Weston Gardens is at 8101 Anglin Drive, Fort Worth. 817-572-0549. www.westongardens.com

Anyone For Tea?

HOW THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF THE BEVERAGE CAN SUIT YOU TO A TEA

Numerous scientific research findings have highlighted the following with regard to tea and health (It is also interesting to note that many studies show that health benefits are not limited to drinking Green tea.; Black tea is also beneficial):

- **Heart Health:** Current research indicates that drinking three to five cups of tea a day can offer significant benefits ranging from reducing heart attack risk to lowering LDL cholesterol. One recent study found that participants who drank more than 16 fluid ounces of Black tea per day had a 50 percent lower prevalence of cardiovascular disease than non-tea drinkers. In another study conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture it was found that those who drank five cups of Black tea per day (along with a diet low in fat and cholesterol) reduced their LDL cholesterol by about 11 percent after three weeks.
- **Colon Cancer:** Benefits to gastrointestinal (GI) health as a result of tea-drinking seem to be cumulative and dependant upon the amount of tea consumed per day as well as the number of tea-drinking years. One particular study shows that women who consumed the equivalent of 2.5 cups of tea per day had a 60 percent reduction in rectal cancer risk, compared with women who drank less than 1.2 cups of tea daily. An additional study found tea drinkers to have an approximate 42 percent reduced risk of colon cancer as compared to non-tea drinkers. Men who drank more than 1.5 cups of tea per day were found to have a 70 percent lower colon cancer risk.
- **Skin Cancer:** According to University of Arizona research findings, participants who drank iced black tea and citrus peel had a 42 percent reduced risk of skin cancer and hot black tea consumption was associated with a significantly lower risk of the most common form of skin cancer, squamous cell carcinoma (SCC).
- **Bone Health:** Two recent studies found that tea-drinking women had higher bone mineral density (BMD) measurements than non-tea drinkers, especially in those who had been habitual tea-drinkers for six or more years.