



THE DILMAH
WAY OF TEA

by EDWIN SOON





The Dilmah Way of Tea

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introduction

The simple and seemingly innocuous word – tea – conceals much more than it reveals. For most tea drinkers, it suggests only a herb that when brewed in boiled water, produces a liquid that is apparently healthy, has different tastes, forms and flavour and could be taken with milk or without. That though is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg, for within the spectrum of hues, textures, styles, and tastes, lies a gift of Nature christened in history by Kings and Emperors, applauded by poets and other literati, and possessed of enormous complexity, variety, art and tradition.

The “Dilmah Way of Tea” is an exploration of that complexity, variety, art and tradition. It is also a celebration of real tea and its wonderful relevance to a 21st Century lifestyle. It offers a fresh perspective on the world’s favourite beverage. “The Dilmah Way of Tea” also commemorates a phenomenon in the tea industry that is as momentous as tea’s first arrival in Europe.

Next to water, tea is the most consumed beverage in the world. Yet the understanding of tea is often limited to a superficial and very commercial interpretation. Tea is an ancient herb and its cultivation, manufacture and appreciation go back over 5000 years. The capacity to offer a fresh viewpoint on any aspect of this noble heritage cannot be taken lightly. To appreciate our credentials in claiming this standpoint, we share with you the story of a Teaman, and his undying passion for tea.

That Teaman is our father, Merrill J Fernando, the Founder of Dilmah. Born in 1930, he, was in his 20’s when selected to join the very first group of Ceylonese (Sri Lanka was then known as Ceylon) to be trained in tea tasting. Dilmah’s Way of Tea had its genesis in the 1950’s when a young and idealistic Merrill observed in London the strangulation of our country’s tea industry.



“Our Way of Tea goes further, for as a family with a love for tea, we believe that tea offers as much to the grower as to the tea drinker; the millions involved in nurturing, handpicking, producing and packing Camellia Sinensis, the tea plant. That belief is founded on my conviction in the potency of business as a matter of human service.”
Founder of Dilmah, Merrill J. Fernando

Even though London was several thousand miles from the nearest tea plantation it was, strangely even in post-colonial times, the centre of the tea world. Ceylon tea was sent to London to be auctioned to European and American packers. They would add value to the tea by packing, branding and marketing it. In their control therefore, was the process of value addition; the part that offered the greatest reward from the sale of tea.

The process benefited only the corporations which operated in those countries. What returned to Ceylon was only a token of the actual value of the tea – yet it was the Ceylonese who had grown the tea, nurtured, hand-picked, tasted and graded the tea!

ETHICAL TEA

Call it the colonial trading system and if it was a system, it was unfair. Such a system still persists, notwithstanding in a mildly modified form. Father was the first to challenge that system. His vision was a tea brand that would be owned by the producer – a genuinely ethical tea, and a business that would grow, produce and pack tea at source, supplying customers direct – benefiting tea drinkers with a fresher and better quality tea and benefiting the producer with a fairer share of the revenue from its sale .

His quest to make tea ethical took over three decades for Merrill's beliefs were fiercely opposed by vested interests in the West, as well as by his own countrymen who could not see beyond the prevailing system. He persisted and with much time and effort eventually succeeded in launching his tea in 1988 – a tea that is picked, and packed at source under a brand that is owned by the producer and supplied to customers direct and garden fresh. The launch of Dilmah has benefited Sri Lanka and her ailing tea industry as much as it has tea drinkers around the world.

In the case of tea, freshness is of vital importance. When tea is produced – and in Ceylon it is made in a manner that is centuries old – all efforts are made to preserve its taste, flavour, character and natural antioxidants from the moment it leaves the estate. Fresh tea is richer in flavour, aroma and with it, natural goodness and enjoyment.

“In the 1960’s Merrill began using profits from his bulk tea business to help his staff of 18 and their families. Since then, just as Dilmah has grown, so has its humanitarian and environmental contributions.”
Dilhan and Malik Fernando

The colonial tea trading system was – and continues to be – detrimental to tea quality, its inherent health benefits and ultimately the economic development of the tea producing countries. The unfair structure of that trade denies the producer an opportunity to participate in the most rewarding post-harvest element of their produce; branding and value addition.

Tea is one of Sri Lanka's main exports, nearly two million people are involved directly and indirectly – the tea industry should therefore have acted as a strong catalyst to the country's development. Yet the majority of the economic benefit from tea accrued to the traders – packers and brand owners in the developed nations - and robbed the producer of a fair share of the price consumers paid for tea. The role of the producer in Sri Lanka was restricted to supplying quality tea at the lowest possible price.

If Merrill did see things differently, his vision was neither revolutionary nor novel for what he sought was simple and logical – the opportunity, as a producer, to bring his produce to market. This meant cutting out the involvement of exploitative middlemen – the corporations that wished to control branding and value addition. It does not seem so long ago but it was in 1988 that Dilmah was born, first in Australia then New Zealand and on to over 100 countries around the world.

A MATTER OF HUMAN SERVICE

If the Dilmah Way of Tea represents a paradigm shift of business in the traditional tea industry, it is made more remarkable because Merrill had an overriding goal in his vision - to share the benefits of his success with the underprivileged.

Money for the development of poor countries often exists in their produce but so often goes into the wrong pockets. That is due to the unfair system of trade that persists even today. This is a burning issue that has always driven our family in our belief in the philosophy of business as a matter of human service. In the 1960's Merrill began using profits from his bulk tea business to help his staff of 18 and their families. Since then, just as Dilmah has grown, so has its positive humanitarian and environmental impact.

No-one who visits Father for a cup of tea with him in his office can miss the biblical maxim that is displayed on the wall behind him, "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. Proverbs 11:24-25". This is his belief and his experience. Always acknowledging the reality that divine inspiration has driven the success of Dilmah against giant corporations in a relatively short period of time, that maxim is the foundation of the family philosophy of caring and sharing that makes Dilmah different.

The MJF Charitable Foundation was established by Merrill J Fernando to fulfill his pledge to share the success of Dilmah with the under-privileged. The work of the Foundation has impacted thousands of lives – from victims of the tsunami to the differently-abled to under-privileged children. That humanitarian service evolved in 2007 to the environment with the establishment of Dilmah Conservation, an organization with which IUCN - the World Conservation Union seeks to promote environmental conservation and sustainable economic development.

TEA, A TOOL OF DEVELOPMENT AND FAIR TRADE

Our Way of Tea is not simply a story of tea and philanthropy but hopefully also a demonstration of the potency of branding and value addition. In fair and equitable union with quality produce and an ethical outlook there is phenomenal opportunity for development in the existing trading relationships between rich and poor countries. Genuinely ethical trade is a very tangible catalyst for sustainable economic development. .

In "The Dilmah Way of Tea" we hope to share with you the often concealed enjoyment in real tea, being truly a gift of God for the pleasure tea offers, for its healing properties and for its potential as a catalyst for the development of millions involved in its production.

Dilhan and Malik Fernando





ORIGINS OF TEA

TEA HISTORY

According to legend, some 5,000 years ago, Emperor Shen Nung who was travelling around the Chinese countryside had asked for his water to be boiled as it was foul and unfit for drinking. A breeze caused a leaf to separate from the branch of a plant, which then fell into his cup of hot water. The curious emperor let the leaf steep, then sipped the brew. Tea, brewed from the *Camellia Sinensis* plant came into being.

“Tea is suggestive of a thousand wants, from which spring the decencies and luxuries of civilization.”

Agnes Repplier,
1858-1950, American
author and social critic

In another legend of 6th century Indian origin, Prince Dharma decided to leave for China to spread the word of Buddha. To dignify his mission, he vowed to meditate for nine years. By the end of the third year, he almost succumbed to sleep. To prevent that from happening, he decided to cut off his eyelids; when they fell to the ground, a tea bush sprouted from the earth. The Japanese version has Bodhidharma visiting China and chewing leaves from a bush in order to stay awake during a meditation session.



Legends aside, historians have traced the purposeful cultivation of tea to Szechuan, China, around the year 350 AD. By the second half of the Tang Dynasty (618 to 907 AD), tea took its place side by side with painting, calligraphy, poetry and music composition, and other scholarly pastimes. The first tea-specific manuscript, The Classic of Tea (Cha Jing), commissioned by tea merchants and written by the poet Lu Yu (780 AD) was published. During this period, tea had become such an important cash crop that the government imposed the first known tea tax.

Tea made its way to Japan late in the sixth century, along with Buddhism. A Japanese monk by the name of Saicho (767 to 822 AD) brought a few tea shrubs from China and planted them at the base of the sacred Mt. Hiei.

TEA IN EUROPE AND ENGLAND

During the mid 1500s, the Portuguese who monopolised the spice trade may have shipped some tea to Lisbon. However, none of the European countries traded any tea until 1610 when a Dutch vessel returning from Java brought the first case of tea – which they traded with the Chinese for a crate of sage.

A century later, The British East India Company which was set up to compete with the Portuguese and Dutch began importing tea. When tea was first introduced in England, it was a heavily taxed luxury item, purely reserved for the enjoyment of royals and aristocrats.

“There are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea.”
Henry James.
The Portrait of a Lady

In the early 19th Century, Anna, the seventh Duchess of Bedford, one of Queen Victoria’s ladies-in-waiting ‘invented’ afternoon tea. During her day, the convention was to consume a huge breakfast, followed by a small lunch, and dinner late in the evening. Each afternoon, the duchess experienced a “sinking feeling” of hunger in her stomach. One afternoon, she instructed her servants to serve tea and little cakes in her boudoir. Over in Edinburgh, ‘breakfast tea’ was invented by a Scots tea-master who devised the name for his blend. Subsequently, Queen Victoria popularised it. Tea was to take its place in the English social rituals, replacing ale as the national drink. The English would commence with early morning tea, then have breakfast tea, tea at lunch, afternoon tea, nursery tea, five o’clock tea, high tea and even tea at the bedside.

TEA & AMERICA

As tea was a taxed commodity, smuggling became rampant. The British East India company realised that America was a new market that they could exploit. The Tea Act of 1773 was enacted to give the British East India company a monopoly over tea distribution in America.

American colonists however failed to see the benefits of repatriating tax revenues from tea back to Britain. In December 1773, a group of Americans boarded British ships in Boston and dumped 342 chests of tea into the harbour as a mark of protest. This defiant act became known as “The Boston Tea Party” and the incident led up to the American Revolution.

LATTER DAY AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO MODERN TEA CULTURE

Ice Tea - It was at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904 when Englishman Richard Blechynden attempted to entice Americans who were only familiar with green tea from China, to try some black tea from India and Sri Lanka. Because of a heat wave, few at the fair were interested in a hot drink. Blechynden had a brain wave – he added ice to his black teas, and ice tea came to being.

Tea bags - They are the invention of a New York tea and coffee merchant, who in 1904, sent to his special customers some samples of tea that were sewn by hand into silk bags, as it was less costly than using tin boxes that were popular at that time. To his surprise, the orders started rolling in as his customers favoured the ease of preparing tea-bag tea compared to loose tea.

TEA & INDIA

The British parliament had always been wary of the dependency on China as the sole source of tea. “Why painstakingly import tea from China when one can plant them in the colonies?” was the question asked by the English in the early 19th Century. As a consequence, great effort was put into seeking an alternative source for tea supplies.

Since the British East India Company was to administer India on behalf of the crown, the parliament encouraged the commercial venture to develop alternative sources of tea in India. Clandestinely and surreptitiously, Chinese tea seeds were taken from China and planted in Calcutta's Botanical Gardens in the early 1800s and then sent to Assam for cultivation. The British however discovered that the Chinese seeds did not grow well but a local Assam bush seemed to be able to produce a similar tea. The first set of local Assam teas sent to England were so well received that it kicked off the Indian tea industry. Assam teas are however different from Chinese teas, and today are known for their malty liquors and promoted as "milk teas".

"I'm not interested in immortality but only in tea flavour."

Lu Tung

Not long after the Assam trial, another experiment in Darjeeling involving Chinese seeds as well as Assam seeds, proved to be a success. At lower elevations, the Assamese plant seemed to do very well, while the Chinese plant excelled at higher elevations. Today, both varieties thrive in Darjeeling. Darjeeling teas are prized for their unique muscatel flavour and are best enjoyed without milk.

TEA & SRI LANKA

The production of black tea in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) began after a deadly fungus destroyed most of the coffee crop on the island. A British coffee estate owner, James Taylor, decided to plant 10 acres of land with tea bushes.

Taylor harvested the leaves, rolled them by hand and fired the oxidised leaves on clay stoves over charcoal fire. In 1875, the first shipment of Ceylon tea arrived in London and was sold for a very good price at a tea auction. Because tea plants' growing conditions are similar to that of coffee, many former coffee estates were converted to tea plantations. Over a decade later, in 1893, a million Ceylon tea packets were sold at the Chicago World Fair. A world record was attained, and the rest is history.

TEA AROUND THE WORLD

Tea is today grown in Kenya, Turkey, Indonesia, Vietnam, Argentina, Bangladesh, Iran, Malawi, Uganda, Cameroon, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Georgia and many other countries. China and India remain the largest producers of tea with Sri Lanka running third. World production is over 3 million tonnes.

Right: *Ceylon Silver Tips – handmade white tea, from Dilmah's Kataboola Estate*



TEA CULTURE

Tea has journeyed from the lush forests of China and the Buddhist temples of Japan to the vast tea gardens of India, and beyond. In China, tea made from aged leaves is savoured like rare wine. In Japan, powdered green tea is reverently whisked in a ceramic bowl in preparation for the tea ceremony. On the lawn of a planters' club in India, tea is served in cups covered with tiny beaded doilies to keep the tea free from dust.

The extraordinary plant has given rise to ceremonies, ignited wars, inspired races, produced health supplements, and to this day, continues to be one of the world's favourite beverages. The art of enjoying tea, however, varies from country to country.

*"Make tea not war"
from Monty Pythons Flying
Circus (Hells Grannies
Sketch), it was on the
back of their leather
jackets*

In Tibet, tea is an offering; prepared daily and consumed throughout the day. Black tea leaves are boiled for several hours. The infusion is then poured into a section of a hollow bamboo, where it is churned up with a plunger together with a handful of salt, a pinch of soda, and a good lump of butter.

Right: Arabic tea pot from Saudi Arabia



In India, tea is also called chai (the Indian term for tea). These days, black tea is drunk with milk and sugar, and chai is often referred to as spiced Indian tea. Tea flavoured with spices such as ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, cloves and black peppercorn is known as masala chai.

Tea is the national drink of Iran and Afghanistan, and is drunk very sweet. In the Châikhânes (Iranian tea houses), tea is poured into a saucer, and sipped with a lump of sugar in the mouth. In Egypt, Bedouin tea is prepared using the traditional method of steeping black tea in boiled water and letting it infuse for a few minutes. It is almost always sweetened with cane sugar and often flavoured with fresh mint leaves.

In Australia, tea is enjoyed as in England but there is an 'ocker' version called Billy Tea. In the Australian Bush, tea is made using the 'billy' – a metal can with a wire handle and cover is filled with water and suspended over an open fire. When the water boils, a handful of tea leaves are added and the brew is boiled for a few minutes. The billy is then removed, and swung overhead, back and forth at arm's length. This ensures that the tea leaves sink to the bottom, given the centrifugal force. The tea is poured into metal mugs, and mixed with milk and sugar. Sometimes a few scented eucalyptus leaves are added to the brew for an aromatic flavour.

For the Chinese, tea can be prepared in one of two ways. One of which was popularised in the Ming era – preparing it directly into small individual porcelain bowls called the zhong or gaiwan.

The other method which hails from a much older era is a ceremony of sorts. Tea is brewed in tiny clay teapots called yixing (purple clay) which were used during the Song dynasty (969 AD to 1279 AD). The same tea will be re-brewed several times. Different pots are reserved for various teas so that no cross brewing occurs. This is because the unique clay pots absorb the flavour, smell, and colour of the tea, and over time, the pot lends its flavour to the tea.



The Japanese have taken tea and developed it into an art de vivre. O-cha (green tea) is integral to Japan culture. The earliest rituals involving tea in the 6th century was its use in Buddhist meditation sessions. Monks promoted tea for its healthful properties and later in the 16th century, tea master Sen Rikyu refined the tea ceremony. Two centuries later, Japanese sencha, a roasted yet unfermented green tea was introduced. Today, Japanese tea ceremonies are held in a tea room or special pavilion, where participants celebrate the uniqueness of the moment: the making of matcha (powdered green tea), floral arrangements, tea utensils, ceramics, calligraphy, and a reverence for nature and the creation of a perfect moment in time.

Tea in Russia traces back to 1567. Two Cossacks, Petrov and Yalychev, who had experienced this Chinese elixir, decided to introduce their favourite brew to friends when they returned home. Tea was subsequently brought into Russia from China via caravans. Incidentally, central Asia and the Middle East discovered tea as a result of trading caravans.

Initially, tea was expensive in Russia as it had to travel a long way. Before it became popular with the masses, it was enjoyed only by the wealthy and at times taken as medicine. Tea was also appealing to the Russian lifestyle because it was a warm and hearty brew, often sweetened with sugar, jam or honey.

*“Tea is drunk to forget
the din of the world.”*

Tien Yiheng

Russian tea and the samovar are inseparable, as this highly decorated tea urn is central to the tea ceremony. Originally, the samovar was a Mongolian hot pot, adapted and modified so that it served functionally both as heater and source of boiling water with which to brew the tea. In 1820, Russia began making her own samovars in Tula, a gunsmith town which had rich ore deposits nearby, and highly qualified metal workers. Soon, samovars took on decorative aspects; they were made of copper, iron, brass, bronze, silver, pinchbeck (copper-zinc) and other alloys. Today, enjoying tea around a samovar is still a convivial event. Tea is sipped from podstakanniki (a glass) held in silver holders. Typical Russian tea might be a combination of two or three types of tea (such as Ceylon or Chinese Keemun tea complemented by teas of other countries).



Tea was introduced to Morocco in the 18th century via trade with Europe. By introducing the afternoon tea custom to the Moroccan palace, Queen Elizabeth I helped to promote British china (porcelain) tea ware and accessories to Morocco.

“Make a delicious bowl of tea; lay the charcoal so that it heats the water; arrange the flowers as they are in the field; in summer suggest coolness; in winter, warmth; do everything ahead of time; prepare for rain; and give those with whom you find yourself every consideration.”

Sen Rikyu, tea master, on Chanoyu (Japanese Tea ceremony)

The English Queen sent many gifts to the King of Morocco including some delicate tea pots and cups. The Moroccan palace adopted the custom but with an adaptation – rather than drink black tea, the taste preference was for green tea with mint. Sharing tea became a ceremony. Besides that, the tea even became one that could be paired with a meal.

In North Africa, enjoying tea is an expression of hospitality and culture. At the tea-drinking ceremony, incense is lit, and all those taking part will wash their hands in orange blossom water and watch the host prepare the tea. Three successive infusions are served, each sweeter than the previous. With the last service, the polite guest will signal that it is time to depart. In the desert, the tea is an all male affair for the Tuaregs. The head of the family prepares the brew and serves it to the guest. The Tuaregs describe the infusions as such – the first is strong like life, the second is good like love, and the last is as sweet as death.

The nomadic population in North Africa spread the tea culture across North Africa and also to numerous Arabic countries. It should be noted that during the 9th century, an Arab trader named Soliman was among the first to mention the Chinese herb and its importance in China.

Tea did travel to Egypt via Pakistan, Iran and Turkey, but the progression of tea stopped there because the Libyan desert made it impossible for traders to cross. In Arabia today, tea is a famous custom which is used in both casual and formal meetings between friends, family and even strangers. The tea is black (without milk) and has herbal flavouring that comes in many variations.

Yixing Tea Pot

The special purple zisha clay (containing iron, quartz and mica, and found only in Yixing, China) from which pots are made, absorbs the delicate flavours of tea brewed in it. It has been said that if you run out of tea, pour boiling water into an empty but seasoned pot and miraculously, you will have tea!



In Turkey, a strong black brew is prepared using two stacked kettles (boiled water from the lower kettle is used to fill the smaller kettle atop which is also used to brew tea). The tea is strained into tulip-shaped glasses and served with sweetmeats. In the eastern part of the country, a cube of beetroot sugar is placed under the tongue before the tea is sipped from the glass.

In Southeast Asia, sweetened tea is favoured too. In Malaysia, strong tea is brewed and then mixed with thick condensed milk and plenty of sugar. Sometimes tea and condensed milk are mixed together and then poured several times between two jugs so that the liquid becomes deliciously frothy. This drink is dubbed “teh tarik” or “pulled tea”.

“Throughout the whole of England the drinking of tea is general. You have it twice a day and though the expense is considerable, the humblest peasant has his tea, just like the rich man”.
La Rouchefoucauld wrote in 1784

The Thai version features condensed milk too but Thai tea (also known as Thai iced tea) or “cha-yen” also contains anise, red and yellow food colouring, and sometimes other spices. This tea is further sweetened with sugar.

Over in Hong Kong, the English-style tea has evolved into a local version with the use of evaporated milk. It is especially popular at cha chan tengs (Chinese tea eateries that serve affordably-priced dishes and drinks) and fast food outlets. Meanwhile, traditional Chinese teas such as green, vintage Pu-erh, jasmine and other floral teas are served with meals in dim sum restaurants.

In Sri Lanka tea is traditionally taken in the style introduced by the British – with warm milk. In the many roadside tea ‘boutiques’ tea is usually made with strong Dust grade tea, sweetened with condensed milk and then ‘pulled’ to produce a frothy, milky but delicious brew. Tea is as much food as beverage for working men and women who rely on the hot, sweet brew for energy. Some may have a ‘plain tea’ which is tea without either milk or sugar.

‘Ginger tea’ a fusion of plain tea, sugar and fresh ginger is also popular. In the teashops where ordinary Sri Lankans go about doing business, talking politics or just chatting, tea is usually served in glasses, accompanied by bananas and pastries.



Historical records show that the Arabs first introduced the coffee plant to India and Ceylon during the late 1400s. In 1825, the British colonials saw the start of the coffee industry that also marked the beginnings of the plantation industry in Ceylon. Exactly 40 years later, in 1865, the coffee industry came to a dramatic halt. A leaf disease had spread rapidly throughout the countryside, and within five years, every coffee district was infected. The next 20 years saw planters in frantic effort as the fungus called the “Coffee Rust Disease” decimated crops across the country. Thousands of acres of coffee plants were uprooted and burned.



Widespread ruin drove more than 600 European coffee planters to seek new pastures in foreign lands. Ironically, when the 'Rust Leaf' disease first made its debut in the 1860s, a few growers were already experimenting with tea. During that time, the Worm Brothers who did much work in developing Ceylon, successfully planted a field of tea bushes with Chinese seedlings on the Ramboda Pass. Meanwhile, Mr Llewellyn of Calcutta also tested some Assam seeds at Dolosbage.

Thanks to them, both experiments proved that tea could be grown on the island, although there were no commercial results garnered from these experiments. It was James Taylor, a pioneer coffee planter, who proved that tea could be grown profitably as an alternative plantation crop to coffee. He planted about 10 acres of tea on his estate at Loolecondera in Upper Hewaheta, manufactured the produce and sold it in England.

"Steam rises from a cup of tea and we are wrapped in history, inhaling ancient times and lands, comfort of ages in our hand."
Faith Greenbowl

Indeed there were so many upsides to growing tea compared to coffee. Tea was found to be a hardier plant. Excess rain could wreck the coffee blossoms, but it does no harm to tea. Bad weather during the short coffee season was a huge risk, but for tea, harvests could be made throughout the year. Furthermore, growers soon found that tea grows well at various altitudes as long as the soil and rainfall were favourable.

CEYLON TEA ARRIVES IN LONDON

In 1873, Ceylon tea made its first foreign appearance at Mincing Lane, London, the tea centre of the world. It was received by a well-organised group of importers and distributing houses that were not in the least interested in this Ceylon product. Ceylon teas were unknown in Britain, and any product associated with an unknown region was viewed with suspicion. For the British, tea had to be Chinese in origin.

Hopeful European tea planters in Ceylon were not discouraged however, and turned to appointing friends in England as agents, literally creating their own distribution network. Working with friends helped build meaningful business connections. It paid off only later when the British public acquired a taste for Ceylon tea. Until then, exports consisted of a few chests at a time.

The export trade in tea might have begun in 1873 when a chest of Ceylon tea weighing 23 lbs. found its way into the auction centre of the Tea Exchange in London and was valued at a princely sum of Rs.58.00. By 1879, the export quantity was not to be sniffed at for it had reached a formidable amount of 100,000 lbs.

CEYLON'S TEA INDUSTRY TAKES SHAPE

The year 1879 also marked the end of the World Depression and colonists who had left Ceylon returned to participate in the cultivation of this new crop. As the tea industry took off, a new brand of young persons arrived in Ceylon to take up the challenge of building the new tea industry. The government opened up forestland suited for tea cultivation.

There however, still remained much criticism about Ceylon teas. A tea analyst at the British Customs expressed that "fermentation had not been sufficiently and properly carried out such that essential oils, which were responsible for the unpleasant taste in the tea, had not been sufficiently destroyed and removed".

Another tea examiner at St. Katherine Docks objected to the difference in flavour of Ceylon teas compared to Chinese varieties. However one fact remained – over time, Ceylon teas in London began to realise much higher prices than Chinese tea.

INVESTING IN TEA

TEA PROCESSING

Planters were an optimistic lot. They began trials in fermenting, varying temperatures and durations in an effort to achieve higher quality teas. Tea factories equipped with the latest and best machinery were being built. The planters also contributed to a fund so that they could hold exhibitions in North and South America, Australia and Paris. Meanwhile, the convenience of a quick and an easy passage to Ceylon from England through the Suez Canal, and by rail or road to the hill-country, also prompted many British capitalists to invest in Ceylon.

There were other good reasons to invest. Historical records described the optimism - “Freight was available at moderate rates to London, Australia and America. The workforce was hard-working and labour was cheap. A large body of creative artisans to assist the planters in the workshops and factories, with the machinery and other processes of tea manufacture were at hand. Having already been through the financial crisis in coffee, the cultivation of tea was going to be undertaken by a band of persons, devoid of the speculative element that was rampant among the pioneers of the coffee industry”.

By the turn of the century, tea plantations covered 25,000 acres. Correspondingly, tea exports were averaging 68,000,000 lbs. during the later part of the 19th century. For the British, having Ceylon tea (and Indian tea) meant they would not need to rely on Chinese tea. By 1965 and shortly after, Ceylon overtook India to become the largest tea-exporting country in the world. Ceylon tea planters presided over estates ranging from 4,000 to 6,000 acres.

LAND REFORM

The name Ceylon was changed to Sri Lanka (“resplendent island”) on May 22, 1972. At the same time, The Land Reform Law of 1972 came to being and imposed a ceiling of 20 hectares on privately owned land as well as sought to distribute lands in excess of the ceiling for the benefit of landless peasants. Many of the 5,600 owners possess about 200 acres each, which is equivalent to nearly 1.3 million acres.

Between 1972 and 1974, the Land Reform Commission took over holdings of individuals. In 1975, the Land Reform Law was amended and plantations owned by joint-stock companies also came under state control. Altogether two thirds of tea lands were taken.

It was a testing period for Sri Lanka's tea industry from those years up till 1980. Tea prices too reached uneconomical levels; production levels seemed to go into a reverse trend, and by 1983, Sri Lanka's tea crop declined to 179 million kg – which was no different to production levels of the 1950s.

Land reform and nationalisation of plantations had simply resulted in a severe loss in the competitiveness of the country's tea industry in the international market. In addition, inadequate investment to replenish old tea stocks and poor management resulted in declining yields and low labour productivity. In 1992, the Sri Lanka government restructured the tea industry by leasing the state owned tea plantations to the private sector for a short period, and eventually in 1995 privatized further through a long term lease and the establishment of 22 Regional Plantation Companies.

“Not often is it that men have the heart when their one great industry is withered to rear up in a few years another as rich to take its place, and the tea-fields of Ceylon are as true a monument to courage as is the lion at Waterloo.”

Arthur Conan Doyle
in De Profundis

PRIVATISATION

The effects of privatisation were positive. By 1998, tea production again registered a bountiful harvest of 280 million kg. A new record. Furthermore, tea exports from Sri Lanka also reached an all time high. This marked a golden period for the tea industry. However, it was not always smooth sailing for an industry that had remained under the government's wings for so long.

There had to be reorganisation and restructuring. Factories had to meet certain standards to obtain ISO 9002 certification. New machinery was installed, higher hygiene standards were imposed, and producers began to change their mindset. A new trend began to gain momentum – adding value to tea and producing quality teas. Uneconomic tea lands were turned into fuel-wood plantations and timber forests. Meanwhile, wages were increased and welfare issues became important. Training for personnel was instituted at all levels – to enable staff to function more effectively in the changed environment.

Some tea plantation companies even began to look ahead. Rather than relying heavily on selling tea as a commodity, they explored downstream activities. This included adding value at source and becoming exporters of 'finished' tea (cartons, teabags, and instant tea) which until then was the exclusive domain of the tea traders. All this was done with the goal of providing uninterrupted supplies of a high quality tea to customers.

PLANTING OF TEA

Tea has never been an indigenous plant of Ceylon. The British in 1841 experimented with 200 plants in the hill country of Nuwara Eliya. Some Chinese varieties were also planted in Pussellawa, a town in the Kandy District.

Right: Handpicked tea leaves and buds awaiting withering, the first stage in the traditional, orthodox tea production method that is widely used in Sri Lanka



The next shipment of plants came from Assam, India in 1842, and they were planted in Dolosbage. Cultivation of tea was carried out on an experimental basis for a further three decades until James Taylor proved its commercial possibility. Tea unlike coffee was planted in accordance with the topography and weather patterns of Ceylon. The monsoon season brought rain essential for the growth of the tea plants. Meanwhile, dry periods between the monsoon allowed the best quality tea leaves to be picked.

As rain would usually fall on the range of hills in Central and Southern Ceylon, the bulk of tea planting in the late 1890s was centred in Dimbula, Dickoya, Maskeliya, Kelani Valley, Dolosbage, Pussellawa, and Matale districts. By 1892, there were 11 estates of over 1,000 acres in extent. They were Diyagama East, Meddecombra, Spring Valley, Dambattenne, Glen Alpine, North Matale, Pallekelle, Westhall, Great Western, Rothschild, and Lebanon.

TENDING & PRUNING

The tea plant needs water drawn from the ground. It grows best under partial shade and fields of tea are therefore dotted with 'shade trees', but these trees should not compete with the tea plant for nourishment. And cultivation of the soil is an integral part of tea propagation. There should be good ground cover; the soil should not be deficient in minerals and plant food, so has to be cultivated to foster the health and the vigour of the tea bush.

With an ideal environment established, the tea plant is left to produce. A tea bush can be productive within two and a half to three years depending on the seasonal changes and climatic conditions of each growing area. A tea bush can produce tea for over 100 years. The oldest plants in Sri Lanka are 125 years old and although yielding comparatively much less than younger plants, are still in production. New plants from the nursery will be used to replace older plants (as well as plants that might have been affected by disease).

If left to grow wild, the tea can grow into a 60-foot tree. Pruning achieves the objectives of maintaining a convenient height for easy harvesting, stimulating shoot growth and ensuring a healthy plant frame.

Pruning is generally done over two and a half to four years depending on the particular tea garden. The tea bush is pruned to encourage the growth of new shoots or 'flush' and when the bushes stop producing flush, they will be pruned again. This occurs roughly every three to four years at low altitude and every four to five years at high altitude.

The growth of the tea bush has to be modified in order to create a low, flat, wide bush that will be easier to pluck. The wide spread will increase the number of plucking points. Once again, pruning is a much more complicated process than it may at first seem, as there are different pruning styles which can be used, depending on the type of tea and the location.

After pruning, it is important to remove all the weeds and ensure the area remains weed free. Newly pruned fields and fields of young plants are particularly vulnerable to weeds. Once the bush has developed wide spread and good soil coverage, the area between the bushes too, is shaded; meaning not as many weeds will grow.

PLUCKING

For the plucking process, there is much more involved than just plucking a leaf from a bush. The standard of plucking can greatly affect the quality of the end product. In Sri Lanka, tea is still handpicked. Mechanical plucking has been tested, and was found to contribute to deterioration in the quality of the end product, simply because the plucking machine is unable to discriminate between good and bad quality leaves.

Thus even though plucking by hand is labour intensive and more expensive, it is essential for quality tea. The fields are plucked regularly, usually every five to seven days, to harvest the 'two leaves and the bud' needed to make tea. Plucking 'two leaves and the bud' means harvesting the bud and the two tender new leaves below it – this is known as fine plucking.

The alternative is to pluck three or sometimes four leaves together with the bud. This is known as coarse plucking and an inferior tea is produced. The haul of each tea leaf picker/plucker is weighed three times a day, and the total each worker has plucked is recorded on a card by the field officer. The pluckers have a daily target of 16kg and are given a bonus for every kilo over 16kg they pluck. Between two and three thousand leaves are needed to produce just one kilo of unprocessed tea.

In Sri Lanka, the pluckers are mostly female, who pick with dexterity and patience. Tea pluckers have to recognise when the flush (the young and tender shoots of tea where flavour is concentrated) should be removed to ensure that the finest teas are produced.

TEA MANUFACTURE

In the process, a kilo of tea is produced (on average) from every 4 kilos of freshly picked leaf. The process of transforming the plucked 'two leaves and a bud' into tea is a precise and complicated process of withering, rolling, fermenting and firing with the aim of removing all but 3% to 4% of the moisture contained in the leaf.

If a mistake is made at any stage in the production, it will have a noticeable and potentially disastrous effect on the end product. Teas fall under the three major stylistic categories: Green, Oolong, and Black Tea.

This categorisation largely comes from the methods used to process the harvested leaves, which determine the dramatic differences in the look, aroma and taste of the finished tea. The most noticeable distinction between teas is achieved through the process of oxidation that darkens the leaves and is responsible for the different appearances and flavour styles.

Green tea is not allowed to oxidise, and is unfermented. Leaves are plucked and immediately steamed or panned (baked), rolled and fired. This kills the fermentation enzymes so no fermentation takes place. The tea retains its bright green colour and fresh, crisp taste.

Oolong tea is partially fermented. Leaves are picked, allowed to ferment, rolled and fired. Firing halts fermentation when it is partly complete. Therefore, the leaves and the liquor have more colour than green tea, but it is not as dark as black tea.

Black tea is fully fermented. Leaves are withered, rolled, fully fermented and fired. The resulting leaves and liquor are usually darker than an Oolong.

There are two methods for manufacturing tea, either CTC (Crush, Tear, Curl) or Orthodox. The CTC method, is similar to Orthodox tea manufacture but instead of the leaves being rolled, they are passed through a series of cylindrical rollers with hundreds of sharp “teeth” that Crush Tear and Curl. The result is tea that brews quickly, gives a dark infusion rapidly and yields more cups per kg.

The CTC tea process sacrifices the delicate natural flavours of tea for the sake of convenience. Orthodox processing follows a technique which began entirely manual and evolved in the 1800s with machines which mimic the process of hand rolling, fermentation and drying of leaves in the sun.

Other categories of tea include herbal, red and scented tea. Herbal tea or tisane is not made from *Camellia Sinensis*, but is an infusion made from herbs or the leaves, roots, stems of fruits or flowers. Rooibos (pronounced “roy-bosh”) meaning red bush, is a South African red herbal tea made from the oxidised leaf of the *Aspalathus Linearis* bush. Rooibos and other ‘teas’ that are not made from the buds and leaves of the *Camellia Sinensis* are not tea. Rooibos, Camomile are in fact infusions with neither the same complexity nor the health benefits of tea.

Scented teas are teas that have been ‘enhanced’ with the addition of aromatic substances. It could involve mixing petals of flowers, spices or the addition of a liquid or oil. For instance, for Earl Grey, oil of the exotic bergamot fruit is absorbed by the tea leaves, which are then dried. Another example – First Ceylon Souchong tea consists of Ceylon Tea, smoked in the style of Souchong but with Cinnamon wood rather than pinewood used in the Chinese souchong tea. Hence, First Ceylon Souchong is a uniquely Sri Lankan souchong.

Tea Manufacture takes place under the constant supervision of the Teamaker and Estate Manager who have the skills and expertise to weigh climatic and process factors with leaf condition, the desired characteristics of the tea they are producing to perfect every batch of tea in a manner that can only be described as artisanal. That manner varies with each batch of leaf, each day and each hour.

From the time the leaf is handpicked, it must be minimally handled as bruising can cause the cells to rupture and oxidation to begin. This will lead to discolouration and unpleasant character due the uncontrolled fermentation.

WITHERING

The main purpose in withering is to reduce the moisture content of the leaf and to soften it so that it becomes pliable. It will then withstand rolling without breaking up into flakes. First, the freshly picked leaf with usually 75% moisture is brought directly to the factory. It is spread out on large troughs with a perforated base – four feet wide and up to 100 feet long. The troughs have a fan fitted at one end. Dry and sometimes hot air is forced through the leaves, bringing the moisture level to 42-45% and naturally and gently concentrating the leaf constituents in preparation for the next stage, called 'rolling'.

Withering is done for a minimum of six hours and exact timing depends on relative humidity. It can take up to 18 hours and whilst moisture level could be reduced much quicker with the use of hot air, it is done slowly with a minimal trauma to the leaf to allow the natural changes to take place within the leaf.

Once withered, the leaf is weighed again and is ready for the next stage – rolling. The withered leaf is usually sent down chutes directly to the rolling machines to avoid over handling of the leaf.

ROLLING

In order to ensure that the rolling room temperature is maintained, manufacture is usually done early in the morning sometimes at around 3 am. The purpose of rolling is to rupture the leaf cells and allow the cell sap to mix. Rolling also starts the process of oxidation, whilst coating the tea leaf with tea juices, and reduces the size of the leaf. Rolling takes place several times, each time usually for 20 – 30 minutes, with a preconditioning roll followed by up to 5 rolls. The bed of the roller is made of wood from the Kitul Palm, *Caryota urens*.

FERMENTATION

Fermentation begins as soon as the rolling process is complete. The rolled leaves, by now a coppery brown colour are spread on ceramic tiled 'beds' approximately 7.5 cm deep. The fermenting leaves are called dhools. The fermentation period varies from 45 minutes to over two hours depending on the quality, colour and strength required. A short process will produce bright and sharp tea while a longer one will change the degree of colour and the character of the end product.

The thickness of spread of the dhools on fermentation tables, the temperature and the humidity can also have an effect on fermentation. The optimum temperature is 24 to 29°C (75 to 85°F), and care should be taken to ensure that the temperature in the rolling room does not exceed 32°C (90°F). Besides the necessary chemicals, two perceptible changes take place initially in colour and aroma – a purely natural process, retaining the integrity of tea as a pure natural herb.

A group of women with large brown baskets strapped to their backs, emerge from the mists of a cool dawn, towards the hills. By the time the rising sun has transformed the rows of cropped tea bushes into a brilliant green-yellow rippling sea, the tea-leaf pickers will already have filled much of their baskets.

Photo courtesy of Palani Mohan, Photographer and Author of "Vanishing Giants: Elephants of Asia", "Hong Kong Lives – An Intimate Portrait" and "Hidden Faces of India."



FIRING/DRYING

After fermentation, the dhools are passed through the dryer at a temperature of 90 to 95°C (194 to 203°F). The purpose of this is to arrest fermentation by destroying the enzymes at high temperature (Reducing moisture is the objective of firing or drying). After firing, the moisture content should not exceed 3% and the tea should be cooled quickly to prevent excessive moisture absorption.

Like every step in the manufacture of tea, drying is a precise operation. Under-firing will cause the tea to be too brown whilst over-firing will result in the tea being burnt, both of which will reduce the quality and value of the end product.

SIFTING/GRADING

The tea proceeds straight from the dryer to be sifted and graded. Tea particles are separated by their shapes and sizes by sifting through a series of progressively finer meshes. The main grades are Leaf and Broken grades with the former being made of larger and longer particles which yield a lighter liquor and the latter, smaller particles which produce darker and stronger liquors.

TEA (CAMELLIA SINENSIS) MANUFACTURING CHART



To separate the different grades, a Rotary Sifter is used. Before mechanisation, this process would have been done by hand. Other machines such as stalk extractors and winnowers are also used to remove fibres and clean the tea. The tea is packed into large sacks or wooden tea chests marked with the date of production, estate name, grade and weight. Finally, samples are sent to tea brokers and tasters.

VARIATIONS OF THE MANUFACTURING PROCESS – TO OBTAIN WHITE, GREEN AND OOLONG TEAS

White teas are entirely handmade. They are rolled by hand and dried in filtered sunlight. In Sri Lanka, white tea is referred to as Silver or Golden Tips. Green tea is not fermented. Fresh leaf, on arrival at the factory, is immediately treated under high temperature by steaming or baking. This deactivates the enzymes that cause fermentation. The oxidation of polyphenols cannot take place and are preserved. This is why green tea has its unique flavour.

In the case of Chinese green tea, the fermentation process is stopped by either exposing the leaves to sunlight or applying warm air to the leaves and then pan-firing the leaves to stop all further processes.

Oolong tea is semi-fermented. In essence, it follows a similar manufacturing process as black tea although the oxidation is for a very short time. Oolong tea is usually much darker than green tea and stronger in taste than green tea; but Oolong is lighter in colour to most black teas and usually has a more delicate taste.

THE BIRTH OF A UNIQUE TEA

“THE DILMAH WATTEGODDE ESTATE 21ST ANNIVERSARY RESERVE”



DAY 01 0600 hours

Second day of February, 2009, the day begins cool and bright as the sun rises over the undulating hills of the Wattegodde Estate. The tender fresh buds that have experienced the season's cool and dry breeze are carefully handpicked.



DAY 01 0730 hours

Handpicking ensures that only the two leaves and bud are harvested. A scant hour later, the first of the leaves and buds arrive at the tea factory.



DAY 01 0830 hours

The leaves have begun withering. Withering reduces the moisture content of the freshly picked leaf to 42% - 45% so that the leaves become rubbery and can withstand rolling without breaking up into flakes. At 2.330 hours, the withered leaves are checked to ensure the moisture level is ideal for rolling.



DAY 02 0030 hours

In accordance with a centuries old traditional process, the withered leaves are rolled.



DAY 02 0100 hours

The leaves have begun fermenting. The major reaction during fermentation is the conversion of catechins (flavanols), into theaflavins and thearubigins, dimeric and polymeric compounds – all responsible for the unique taste, character and healthful properties of black tea.

DAY 02
0200 hours

The fermenting leaves are dried/fired to arrest fermentation and then proceeds straight from the dryer to be sifted and graded.



DAY 02 0400
hours

The leaves and buds have become tea. It is brewed and Dilmah Taster Gunasiri assesses the tea's strength, flavour, aroma, and appearance. The tea is pronounced as special and worthy to be the Wattegodde Estate 21st Anniversary Reserve.



DAY 02 0415 hours

Almost immediately, the tea is checked by the Quality Assurance Team to ensure that it conforms fully to international standards.



DAY 02 0430 hours

Just a little over ten hours since the tea buds and leaves were picked, the tea is packed and sealed in foil pouches so that the flavour and natural goodness in the tea is preserved.

THE DILMAH WATTEGODDE ESTATE 21ST ANNIVERSARY RESERVE



The leaves and buds of tea plants are picked several times a year. Different pickings of tea are referred to as 'flushes'. Each flush has its own flavour characteristics.


Uva Seasonal Flush is a tea that can be produced for only a few days each year, when the confluence of temperature, sunshine, rainfall and wind create the ideal conditions. Uva is so named because it is tea from the Uva Valley.

Darjeeling tea comes from West Bengal in India and can be harvested just after spring rains in March (1st Flush – light tea); later in June (2nd Flush – full bodied, muscatel-flavored); in Autumn and during the Monsoon/rainy season.

Single Estate Assam tea is of the SFTGFOP (Special Finest Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe) grade. Assam became synonymous with Indian Tea since it was discovered in the jungles of India's Assam region in 1823. Assam Teas are known for their robust, malty flavour.

Finest Ceylon Tippy FBOPF
(Finest Broken Orange Pekoe Flowery)

Dombagastalawa Single Estate FBOP
(Finest Broken Orange Pekoe)



clockwise from left
Single Estate Assam, Uva
2007 Flush, Single Estate
Darjeeling, Dombagastalawa
Single FBOP, Finest Ceylon
Tippy FBOPF

A close-up photograph of three distinct piles of dark, dried tea leaves, likely black tea, arranged on a white, circular plate. The leaves are tightly curled and have a rich, dark brown to black color. The background is a plain, light-colored surface, possibly a wall or a backdrop, which makes the dark tea leaves stand out. The lighting is soft and even, highlighting the texture of the leaves. The text "CELEBRATION OF LIFE & LIVING" is centered over the middle pile of tea leaves.

CELEBRATION OF LIFE & LIVING

THE TEA JOURNEY

“I’ve been drinking tea as long as I can remember. I started off by having tea with milk, served regularly by my Greek grandmother. Alongside tea, she also offered me buns or sweet cakes, which I had to dip into my over-sweetened tea. Despite this cloying combination that I had to put up with many times throughout my childhood, I never grew to dislike tea.

What is tea to me? Everything!

While at school and later at college, I drank tea more than any other beverage. I finally managed to escape grandma Eufrozyna’s protective clutches and began to brew tea myself. That was when I stopped adding sugar to my tea, simply to underline my independence from family tradition.

I grew up in the 1960s, during the time of Poland’s communist regime. That was an era that determined all my choices and decisions, including tea. I only drank teas available in our shops during those times. They included Oolong, Madras and Ceylon teas.

Years passed, governments came and went, and even the political system changed. But I remained loyal to tea. The difference now is that I am able to choose the type of tea I want to drink.



After years of trial (and error, which for me include all scented teas), I recognised the superiority of black teas. That does not mean I reject green tea served with Chinese meals or the sweet tea served with mint leaves in Middle Eastern restaurants. However, when I drink those teas I don't experience the delight of drinking Yunnan black or Dilmah black teas. For I drink these two kinds of tea alternately. Each of them has its own qualities and provides its own pleasures.

One day, I realised that drinking it out of a glass or even worse, out of a large mug, deprived me of many sensations. So I decided to buy two sets of tea cups made of good quality porcelain – Rosenthal's White Maria which I have in my Warsaw apartment, and another set made by the famous Luxembourg manufacturer Villeroy & Boch, which I keep in my summerhouse outside Puszczka Biala, Poland.

In the evening – why hesitate serving a tea without theine? To add a twist to the various fruit and herbal teas, you can add additional ingredients such as lime juice, lemongrass and other herbs. To enjoy your favourite teas but with less theine, brew in a cup of boiling water for 30 seconds, then throw out the tea. After, pour fresh boiling water to the infused leaf – More than half of the theine will have been removed...but you still have the taste of the tea.

These were not straightforward purchases. They were preceded by intensive reading about the history of porcelain and the culture of drinking tea. At the same time, I began to study the origins of tea, the various varieties, methods of cultivation and picking.

But let's proceed to the most important matter. The tea that I drink twice a day (but in copious quantities) fulfils various functions. In the morning, it serves as my alarm clock. When I wake up with my head full of dreams, tea enlivens me, gets me on my feet, sets the thought processes in motion and provides me with propulsion for a few hours. This happens when I have very strong tea, brewed against all the rules.

But rules are meant to be broken, so I brew my tea in a small teapot on top of a large steaming kettle. I add one heaped teaspoonful per person, plus an extra teaspoonful just in case. I wait not for three or four minutes, as the rules dictate, but an entire quarter of an hour. And I don't dilute the tea, which my wife insists on doing but drink it straight as it is – dark, aromatic, hot and bitter. Wonderful!

During the evening, when I want to relax after a hectic day, I make a milder tea that is lighter in colour, by letting it brew for a much shorter period. It too relaxes me. But there are evenings that are not meant for rest or play, but for work. Then I break my tea routine and make my tea using the morning method. The mind stays awake and as I am charged up, I can read and write almost till morning.

Friends who visit me regularly are acquainted with my tea. Some of them ask for the morning brew whatever the time of day. Yes, to me, tea is everything: an energising drink, a relaxing beverage, a delicacy and a stimulus. It can also be a cooling drink (even if drunk boiling hot), and a drink that warms me up. Sometimes it can even be an alcoholic cocktail (I have in mind the tea drunk by Polish highlanders, with a few drops of spirit).

Tea makes life worth living!"

Piotr Adamczewski

Journalist and Culinary critic,
www.adamczewscy.pl

TEA ON OCCASIONS

Throughout the whole of England the drinking of tea is general. One has it twice a day and though the expense is considerable, even the humblest peasant has his tea, just like the rich man.

TEA FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION

There was a time when serving tea at home was a social event, usually by invitation only. The occasion provided a chance for ladies and gentlemen to exchange gossip, plan future soirees and be introduced to new acquaintances. Guests arrived from a quarter past four until half past five. Many ladies usually only stayed for a quarter of an hour, as they were on their way to the 'five o'clock tea' elsewhere. The five o'clock teas were grand affairs with buffet tables brimming with an assortment of cakes, breads, biscuits, ices, fruits and sandwiches which were of course accompanied by tea and other drinks such as sherry.

A bright idea came into Alice's head. 'Is that the reason so many tea-things are put out here?' she asked. 'Yes, that's it,' said the Hatter with a sigh: 'it's always tea-time, and we've no time to wash the things between whiles.'

From the Mad Hatter's tea party as told in Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

TEA & THE AFTERNOON GOWN

The Afternoon Tea Gown was first introduced in the 1840s by Anna, the seventh Duchess of Bedford. As afternoon teas were mostly attended by family and close friends, Anna the Duchess' tea gown was uncorseted for the first time in centuries. She inadvertently introduced the casual form of dress that is adopted by society in this present day.

As a result, the 'half dress' came to being; it was a semi-constructed garment that was worn in the afternoon, at home or outdoors as well as for visiting and receptions. It was indeed different from the 'full dress' that was a constructed garment made of fanciful fabrics with low necklines and no sleeves, suited for the evening.



TEA TAKES ME ON A JOURNEY

“Tea is a journey to many destinations but above all, it takes us to a place that is calm, quiet, restorative and relaxing.

What calms me and channels my attention away from the stresses and intensities of the day is the mere act of taking time to brew a proper cup of tea from fresh, premium quality tea leaves, and making sure that the water temperature is just right and counting the minutes until the tea reaches its peak of extraction.

After the perfect cup has been brewed, I sit down in a comfortable chair. I inhale the aroma of the tea and feel the heat of the liquid emanating from the cup. And then I am ready to embark on that journey, emptying my mind of thoughts that might interfere with the visual, olfactory and gustatory pleasure awaiting in the cup.

I then envision the verdant terraced slopes of the tea growing regions that I have visited. I recall the earthy perfume of the tea manufacturing plants. Most of all I picture the warm smiles on the faces of all whom I have met over the years who are engaged in bringing the leaves which have flavoured the liquid in my cup, from garden to local vendors' shelves.

I sigh gratefully, sipping at first, and then imbibing a bit more quickly while the fragrant liquid is still hot, and continuing until the cup is empty. I can then look forward to repeating the same ritual the next day or later that same day, energised but not at all jittery, expectant of where the next cup of tea may take me.”

Robert Wemischner,

*Author of [Cooking with Tea](#) and the forthcoming,
[The Dessert Architect](#)*



Tea has inspired many a creative person. Lu Yu wrote the first known book on tea, *Cha Ching*, in 780AD. Centuries later, in 1862, Okakura Kakuzo, a philosopher, scholar and Boston's Museum of Fine Arts curator for Japanese and Chinese was inspired to write 'The Book of Tea'. More recently in 2006, William Frankel recorded his encounters with prime ministers, political leaders, writers, artists and musicians in a book called 'Tea with Einstein and other Memories'. Contemporary playwright Thomas Kilroy wrote a play about the dreaded writer's block, in Dublin, in 1976, and entitled it 'Tea and Sex and Shakespeare'.



ART

Art has celebrated tea over time. Traditional Japanese screen paintings often depict tea ceremonies. Even the process of tea manufacturing was documented in an artistic manner. In the mid 1800s, Chinese artist Tingqua painted in watercolour, a 12-panel art piece, showing each stage of the tea processing experience from growing to packaging for export.

In modern times, Henri Matisse's 1919 painting was entitled 'Tea for Three' and Jackson Pollock's work of art in 1949 depicted, well, a tea cup!

Other artists have made sculptures out of teapots, teaspoons and teabags. The most noteworthy showcase was an exhibition called 'The Artful Teapot' featuring 250 teapots from antiques to mass produced tea-sets. A hundred world famous artists participated, including Roy Lichtenstein and David Hockney as well as sculptors like Arman and Michael Lucero, and ceramists like Betty Woodman and Beatrice Wood.

ARCHITECTURE

People gather at teahouses to chat, socialise, and enjoy tea – hence the Chinese teahouse came about. Similarly in Japanese tradition, the teahouse was designed so that tea ceremonies could be held.

In the UK, the tearoom arose as an alternative to the pub during the temperance movement in the 1830s. The tearoom soon became known as a Salon de Thé, a term used loosely to refer to restaurants that served tea.

Some examples are Russian Tea Room in NYC, the Orient Teahouse in Tajikistan and Glasgow's Willow Tea Rooms. The Willow Tea Rooms were designed by Scottish architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh – in the spirit of progressive modernity and romanticism of the early 1900s.



FASHION & BEAUTY

Tea has also made it into fashion circles. Designer Kenneth Cole designed 'Tea Time' shoes – a T-strap wedge with a rounded toe in sexy Italian leather. Meanwhile, supermodel Kate Moss joined other celebrities at the White Tea and Diamonds party where guests sipped tea accompanied by canapés. The door gifts included special tea inspired jewels and exclusive white tea blends.

Cosmetic companies have been quick to acknowledge the antioxidant properties in tea. According to UK's Body Shop, polyphenols, one of the major pharmacologically active groups of chemicals in green tea are powerful antioxidants which have more than 20 times the strength of vitamin E.

They can help suppress inflammation and irritation. It is little wonder that cosmetic houses such as Estee Lauder and Elizabeth Arden have introduced creams inspired by tea. Clinique's 'All about Eyes' protects eyes and diminishes the appearance of eye puffs, while Estee Lauder's 'Uncircle' eye treatment contains natural anti-irritant green tea extract. And to "bring sensory treats for mind, body and soul", Elizabeth Arden has packaged a green tea set of scents.

Likewise, Calvin Klein's 'One' fragrance combines green tea-amber with citrus notes. But it was BVLGARI that touted its first perfume, 'Eau Parfumée', as the result of exploring the culture of tea. Bvlgari's scent is based on green tea leaves, "known for their healing and relaxing effect".

And what does Donna Karan have to say but this? "Performed with care, the simplest acts can balance and centre us. The preparation, serving, and drinking of tea has long been one of the most soothing and satisfying of life's rituals. Focus. Find the beauty in life's basics."



TEA & MUSIC

‘Tea music’ or music associated with tea has its origins hundreds of years ago – ever since 17th century tea leaf pickers sang to keep their energy and spirits up. A tea song or cha-song, as they are known in Japan, relates the story of women “bending and straightening, reaching again and again into green bushes”. Another song is about “tropical birds, tropical skies; women who pick the tea in old Ceylon; their eyes are brown and their hair is black”

The 20th century tea song titled ‘Tea for Two’ was a viewpoint of a love-struck man, who plans the future with his new woman in mind. It made its debut in the 1925 musical, ‘No, No, Nanette’. Since then many musicians have written songs incorporating tea in one form or the other. Sting & The Police came up with ‘Tea in the Sahara, with you’, while jazz musician Michael Franks dedicated an album to The Art of Tea. In the world of classical music, Uni/Philips released ‘Tea and Tchaikovsky’ – music to be enjoyed over tea.

Another CD compilation is The 'Art of Tea', featuring Jim Gibson on the piano. It contains 13 arrangements of songs that all relate to tea, from the familiar 'Tea for Two' and 'When I Take My Sugar to Tea' to remarkable selections such as 'Do Re Mi' and 'Suzanne'.

For something exotic, the Trance Music Ensemble consisting of musicians, calligraphers, tea masters, drama actors and floral artisans, performed in Boston, USA in 2006 and presented yet another twist to the Boston Tea Party. The ensemble's unique combination of various disciplines illustrates the aesthetic and philosophical perspectives of Chinese artistic traditions in a session called 'Tea and Music in Dialogue'. In essence, the performance combines teas with different melodies within a tea ceremony to correspond with the varying moods of each composition.

"Lovely Rita, Meter Maid, may I inquire discreetly? When are you free to take some tea, with me?"
The Beatles

The latest tea and music combo is the 'Tea Flower Music'. Songs have been compiled by the Spirit Winds School of Thai Massage and International Healing Centre. Here, music is used to convey the diverse characteristics of tea and flowers to listeners. The composers blend the different features of Chinese instruments such as the paixiao, gaohu, guzheng and pipa with the sound of nature to create a vivid representation of new age music. They forge a new direction for Chinese new age music which is worthy of exploration – collections include the title – Tea Travel – Tea with flower fragrance.

Tea has also been highlighted in the movies. A selected Cannes Film Festival movie recently was entitled 'Cha no Aji' (The Taste of Tea), directed by Japanese writer Katsuhito Ishii. The film concerns the lives of the Haruno family who live in the countryside north of Tokyo. Mother Yoshiko is attempting to return to her old job as a cartoon animator; father Nobuo is a hypnosis therapist who occasionally practises on his own family; son Hajime is smitten over a pretty new classmate; and daughter Sachiko is bothered at inopportune moments by her own giant-sized double, who hangs around sitting on buildings and staring at her.

The Taste of Tea has been described as a 'play' that takes a magnifying glass-like approach, enlarging and ever so slightly distorting moments from everyday life that would normally pass unnoticed in the daily grind.

PERSONALITY OF TEA

“Tea has been my favourite drink since childhood. Whenever I drank tea I felt a kind of ‘magic’ as I did not understand what this plant was all about, and how it was made or processed.

The only thing that I knew was that the best tea was grown in Ceylon, in a far away place somewhere in the Southern seas. As time passed I got to know more about tea and even created a rhyme “you should always be as good as Ceylon tea”. Tea really helped me during my endless exhausting training on the way to the Olympic Figure Skating Championships. It gave me strength, energy and a positive frame of mind when I was stretched to the limit. There is something in this drink which makes people feel special.

Then one day, fate gave me a chance to visit Ceylon, after the Olympics when I won a gold medal. Dilmah invited me to experience something that I could only imagine. When I saw the endless green arena of tea bushes illuminated by warm tropical sunlight, I felt an indescribable lightness. I wanted to fly over these hills and glide through the air that was so fragrant with the aroma of nature’s healing herb. It was really a magical feeling. And I realised that the secret was in the land itself which nurtured in this wonderful plant, a cup of perfection.

But perfection can be achieved only in the right hands of course, for it is a talent given by God, to be able to care and bring out the finest from this leaf. This I saw in my friend Merrill – for him and his family tea company, there is more than magic – there is passion and there is a quest for perfection in tea.

That is the same feeling that I have for my sport. After my visit I understood that life is changeable; things may be bad or good, but when you have Ceylon sun in your heart and tea in your cup, nothing can sadden you.”

Eugeny Plushenko
Olympic Figure Skater, Gold Medallist



TEA WITH ATTITUDE

In this chapter, we propose families of tea – for when one takes the time to consider each tea, the nuances of each will reveal itself. Feeling romantic? Then brew some with Lychee or perhaps some Special Green Tea with Jasmine.

What is tea to you?

Teas with 'Heart' are generous, heart-warming; after a long hard day at work, perhaps the cleansing properties of the teas of 'Purity' are just the perfect drink for you.

There are no hard and fast rules as to when you have your tea, what you have it with or how you have it. However you should begin with good quality garden fresh tea that is unblended (therefore retaining its identity and character). You can however bend some rules to conceive your own tea concoction. Invent a mocktail or cocktail. The cocktail or mocktail should be as natural as possible with the prominent taste of the tea, and the fusion of flavours that is produced should avoid artificial flavours and syrups. Use fresh spice, fruit and natural ingredients, including juices and spirits or even wine.

Yes, the tea will speak to you, so you don't have to drink breakfast teas in the morning. Instead you can enjoy it in the afternoon too. Likewise, who is to say you should not indulge in a white tea after lunch or light up a cigar to go with a honey sweetened Keemun or iced lemongrass green tea?



Earl Grey

Maofeng Fragrant Green

Prince of Kandy

Pu-erh

Single Estate Assam



Body

Galle District OPI

Ming Mei Famous Plum Green

Natural Ceylon Ginger

Single Estate Darjeeling



Spirit

Dombagastalawa Single Estate FBOP

Lapsang Souchong

Organic Ceylon Flowery Pekoe

The First Ceylon Oolong



Soul

Finest Ceylon Tippy FBOPF

Mediterranean Mandarin

Single Estate Oolong

Supreme Ceylon



Heart

Jasmine Extra Special No. 1

Special Green with Jasmine

Vanilla Ceylon

White Litchee No. 1 Hand-rolled



Romance

Darjeeling White Treasure

Jade Butterfly Moroccan Mint Green

Natural Rosehip with Hibiscus

Organic Chun Mei



Mysticism

Ceylon Silver Tips

Keemun Special

Nuwara Eliya Pekoe

The First Ceylon Camellia Flower



Rapture

Ceylon Cinnamon Spice

Ceylon Young Hyson Green

Jasmine Pear Dragon

Pure Peppermint

Rose with French Vanilla

Uva



Passion

Italian Almond

Organic Ceylon Green Pekoe

Organic Rooibos with Bourbon Vanilla

Pure Chamomile Flowers

Sencha Green Extra Special



Purity

“Ecstasy is a glass full of tea and a piece of sugar in the mouth.”
Aleksandr Pushkin

BEND & BLEND

Ever considered breaking the rules? You can! In tea, blending is not compatible with quality as it compromises the identity and terroir of good tea; although in cocktails and mocktails, we are using tea as a primary ingredient in a drink ‘blend’. Why not experiment and come up with your own style of drink. Here are some starting points:

Casino Royale

Brew ½ part Natural Rosehip with Hibiscus with 2 parts Jade Butterfly White

Buddha Boost

1 part Ceylon Young Hyson Green Tea and 1 part Single Estate Assam

Go Go Mango

Mix equal parts of mango juice and Ming Mei ‘Famous Plum’ Green tea. Serve cold.

Berry Mary

Add your favourite berry (*currant, blueberry, redberry etc*) to your pot of Adawatte Ceylon Mid grown OP.

Chamomile Snooze

Brew 1 part Pure Chamomile Tea, ½ part Pure Peppermint Leaves Tea, and add a pinch of lemongrass and a pinch of rosemary.

Casa Blanca

Add to a Moroccan Mint tea a tablespoon of hot chocolate powder.

What could go into a Hip Hop High, Jungle Julep, Tropical Toot, Seamist, Red Dragon and so on? It's your call or rather your skill in blending and mixing. Ingredients friendly to tea include coconut, soy-milk, yoghurt, cocoa, herbs, spices, fruit juices, citrus peel, flowers and more. Brew up tea mocktails, tea freezes, tea smoothies and even tea cocktails. Then, give them names!

Here are the recipes of three award winning tea mocktails and cocktails.

DOMBAGASTALAWA MINT FIZZ (MOCKTAIL)

BY MISS A. M. J. ADHIKARI, TAJ SAMUDRA HOTEL, COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

Ingredients

75ml Dilmah Moroccan Mint Tea
25ml Dilmah Dombagastalawa Tea
15ml Apple Cordial
15ml Rose Syrup
Top up Seven Up

Method

Shake

Garnish

Rose petals mint

Glass

Pocogrande

RED BERRIES ICED TEA (COCKTAIL)

BY MR. DEBENBRA KUMAR OJHA, ANANTARA RESORT AND SPA, MALDIVES

Ingredients

90ml English breakfast tea
40ml Absolute vodka
20ml Triple sec
2 tbsp Raspberry puree
2 nos Fresh strawberry

50ml Cranberry juice

10ml Fresh lime juice

20ml Sugar syrup

Ice cubes

Method

Muddle & Shake

BRILLIANT ISLAND (COCKTAIL)

BY MR. DISUKE ITO, THE STAR BAR JINZA, TOKYO, JAPAN.

Ingredients

30ml Belvedere Vodka
20ml Fauchon Tea Liqueur
10ml Monin Vanilla Syrup
Dilmah Single Estate Tea 'Somerset'

Method

Mix the spirit, liqueur and syrup in a tall glass and top up with the tea.

TEA WITH CIGARS

“I’m sitting on the patio, it’s 5pm in the afternoon, sipping a cup of tea. I light up a long panatela, take a long draw and enjoy the smoke. Sounds great? Sure it does! Tea is not just a beverage, it truly transcends that. The notion of having a nice cigar with a cup of tea breathes the promise of a lifestyle, a luxury.

“Tea, served ice cold, flavoured with aromatics such as lemon grass, and sweetened with a little honey, is another favourite drink with cigars.”

I’d like to describe my experiences in three sections: firstly; with the Watte series of teas and secondly with the “other” teas. The last part will be about the more “fun” and iced teas. By explaining why and how things are done, I hope that you too can embark on your trip to discover the enjoyment of drinking tea and smoking cigars.

The Watte teas are defined by (partly) the altitude of the estate, which, in turn, defines the style, and the taste of the tea. The object is to create a synergy of the flavours of the tea and the cigar as opposed having one in a purely complimentary role. If I were to plan a whole day drinking tea and smoking cigars, I would have to create a game plan. Whilst this might appear to be needlessly obsessive, there is a real reason for everything.

If my first cigar was extremely full bodied, then if the next one was light, my palate would not be able to taste the more subtle components of the lighter cigar. The same is applicable with teas. Drinking the elegant but much lighter Ran Watte tea right after a Yata Watte would leave me wanting and unfairly critical of the Ran Watte tea.



So here is a proposed daily tea drinking and cigar schedule and pairing.

Morning

Uda Watte with a
Cohiba Corona Especial

Before lunch

Ran Watte with a Trés Petit
Corona like a Cohiba Siglo I

After lunch

Uda Watte with a Long
Panatela like a Partagas Serie de
Connoisseur No 2

Tea time

Meda Watte with a Robusto (for example
Hoyo de Monterrey Epicure No 2)

Pre Dinner

Uda Watte with a darker styled Petit
Corona (Partagas Short or a Davidoff
Millenium Blend Petit Corona)

After Dinner

Yata Watte with a Double Corona like
a Partagas Lusitania

I think you begin to get the picture. The strength and the length of the tea drinking and smoking experience define the matching styles. In the morning, we begin with a delicate tea paired with a lighter styled cigar. Before lunch, when our palates are very awake and sensitive, we drink very light, subtle and elegant teas and pair them with very elegant short cigars. By tea time, we move to the realms of a fuller tea and a fuller cigar culminating with the long after dinner experience which pairs heavier teas with the smoking of complex longer cigars.

To compliment the lifestyle issue of drinking tea and smoking cigars, there is the issue of the size and shape of the cigar. The blend of the tobacco is crucial to the taste but the lifestyle notion of the “look” of the cigar is equally important. Thinner cigar might well be full flavoured, but these will always be known as “morning” cigars.

This is very important when creating the atmosphere for enjoying the experience. Long and large cigars like the double coronas will always develop during the smoking experience and would then be perfect for more complex teas that also develop during the brewing period. When we try and deal with the “other” teas, the world of tea drinking and cigar smoking expands to infinity.

Here are some matching tips:

- **Light Teas** with lighter style cigars: White teas with lighter styled and sized cigars. For example, Pure White Tea with a Montecristo Especial No 2. This is an extremely elegant tea with a shorter taste with a quick smoking more delicate and thin cigar.

- **Floral Teas** with medium styled cigars: Match a Jasmine tea with a mid length and strength cigar like a Romeo and Julieta Exhibition No 4. The idea is that floral teas are very opposite in taste to a cigar which has components of chocolate and leather. These floral teas are less complex which are great with a 'middle of the road' smoke.
- **Black Teas** with a "black" smoke: The basis is to match black tannic teas, which are poured and re-poured for hours on end with long cigars that evolve over the hours of the smoking experience. How about a Hoyo de Monterrey Double Corona? The rational? A cigar that starts light but develops into a very full-bodied smoke that develops over time, in sync with the tea.
- **Herbal Infusions** with a clean styled cigar: How about a Chamomile tea with a Long Panatela like a Trinidad Fundores? A clean styled cigar that really holds well with a slightly herby tea.

The idea of more "fun" ways of enjoying tea would be the flavoured and iced teas. Some "pure" tea drinkers might discount these experiences; these teas and ways of drinking tea are here to stay. In many ways, these teas are more focused on the lifestyle issue of drinking tea and smoking cigars. Some might even argue that the tea might compliment the smoking pleasure.

More fruity flavoured teas match up extremely well with stronger cigars. The tannic structure of the cigar does not have to be matched with the complexity of a stronger tea. The fruit just compliments the essence of the cigar. Imagine a Mango tea with a strong Nicaraguan cigar like a Padron Anniversario Maduro! How about having an iced peppermint tea with honey and a slice of lemon on a hot summer afternoon paired with a Corona sized cigar like a Cohiba Siglo III? It sure sounds great (it truly is, I've had it on many an occasion!)

On a more personal note, tea drinking and cigar smoking is both an experience in taste and also in lifestyle. I love having a Ran Watte tea with a vintage cigar and also having an iced Peach tea with a full-bodied H Upmann Magnum 46! The trick is to find the right time and place to do it. Tea drinking and smoking does not have to be an academic tasting exercise.

Sometimes, it's just plain fun!"

Ryan Hong

TV Chef and Food Evangelist



A close-up photograph showing a hand holding a small amount of dark, crumbly tea leaves over a white ceramic bowl filled with more tea leaves. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color. The text "TEA & CUISINE" is overlaid on the right side of the image.

TEA & CUISINE

TEA & CUISINE

It is no surprise that tea goes well with food. Varieties of tea have evolved for thousands of years alongside the regional cuisines that they accompany. Each nation, from India, Japan and China to North Africa, has its own food that sits easily alongside tea at the dining table.

FOOD & TEA MATCHING

Tea can be served as a palate cleanser between dishes or between mouthfuls of a dish; it can be a flavour bridge from one course to the next. It refreshes and readies the palate for the next course or bite. Moreover, certain teas can also be paired with specific dishes to help complete the flavour journey of that dish.

Indeed, one of the greatest pleasures of gastronomy is the coming together of all aspects of dining – the company, ambience, food and drink. And since teas come in numerous styles and flavours, finding the right tea that will meld with what you are eating to create a delightful sensory experience in the mouth, is not as difficult as it sounds.

Taste is individual and achieving a good pairing relies greatly on an individual's palate in an exploration of the natural interplay between food and tea. However, being aware of a few key elements makes exploration of tastes much easier.

Food and tea have three key elements that you can match – flavours, textures and components.

FLAVOUR

Flavour refers to the aromas and tastes of the tea or food – usually described as floral, fruity, nutty, smoky, herbal, spicy, earthy, meaty and so on.

A pairing is achieved when the tea's flavour and aroma matches, harmonises or accentuates the flavours in the food. When the flavours meet on your tongue, they will 'recognise' each other and a harmony of tastes is achieved.

For example, caramel is the common flavour found in crème brûlée and cognac. The caramel flavours in brown beers and roast chicken also bring about a flavour match. Rooibos works with nutty desserts and cakes due to its distinct, sweet, nutty flavour.

Similarly you might choose to pair a smoky tea with barbecued food since both have complementary smoky flavours. Another example is Ceylon Souchong and smoked salmon with sour cream – the cream is a canvas for the tea, but the smoky flavours of the food and tea are fortified in the union. Barbecued food or smoked salmon with smoky tea are strong unions of robust yet similar flavours.

You can also set flavours against one another. Serve barbecued food with a Mint 'tea' or Chamomile infusion. Mint is quite assertive and adds an additional flavour to the smoky tastes of the food while Chamomile 'tea' is less assertive and allows barbecued food flavours to take the lead. Other examples include Earl Grey with pork and ham, chocolate and custards. Chamomile 'tea' is a good mate for roasted meats such as turkey, nuts and peppermint.

White teas are at the other end of the spectrum of flavour, being delicate and elegant. They have subtle flavours, so are best enjoyed with the simplest foods and pure flavours, such as preserved apricot, a light biscuit or a macadamia nut and rice biscuit.

TEXTURE & WEIGHT

Beyond flavour lies texture. Texture refers to the mouth-feel or tactile sensation in the mouth. For example, strongly brewed low country grown tea / black tea is more astringent and weighty in contrast to lightly brewed or high country grown tea / white tea that comes across as lightweight.

Whether similar or contrasting, the texture of the tea and food can become the buttress that holds the pair together. For example, food can be grainy, dry, oily or rough in texture. Some teas might have a buttery feel; others might be mouth-coating in taste. You could serve a tannic Ceylon Supreme tea with oily food such as a hamburger. The tea polyphenols (tannins) bind with the oily proteins of the food, and the heavy texture of the tea mirrors the weight of the food. The overall effect is a smooth taste in the mouth.

Consider the texture and weight of cheese. It is rich and mouth-coating. The accompanying tea needs to be pure to cut through the cream, fat and salt. Ceylon Silver Tips has a linear purity and a mild cleansing effect that suits all cheeses.

Elegant teas are not restricted to only mating with heavy foods. High grown and tippy teas can be a good match for salads; their low bitterness and light fruit allow them to work in tandem with delicate greens and non-creamy salad dressings. Tangy floral teas such as rosehip and hibiscus go well with fruit salads, pears, ice cream and vanilla flavoured foods.

COMPONENTS

Components are the basic elements perceived by the tongue – sweetness, saltiness, bitterness and sourness. In food, the salty components come from ingredients such as anchovies, bacon, yellow and black bean paste, fish sauce and soy. There are also sweet components such as BBQ sauce, honey, and plum sauce. For sour components, lemon juice, tamarind and tomato paste come to mind, while bitter foods include items such as endive and bitter gourd.

An obvious taste match is that of sweetened tea with a sweet dish – this is a mirroring of the sweet component. Tea sweetened with honey is a sure match for many desserts.

The bitterness of tea's polyphenols can also be used to bolster components in food. A tea with lightly bitter polyphenols (tannins) can be served with a cake or sweet dates, in a contrast of bitter and sweet components. Alternatively, consider the match of a delicate steamed fish flavoured with soy sauce, with a delicate high grown tea with a slice of lemon. The citrus-acid nature of the tea with lemon will have an affinity to the salty soy. This is because salt in food 'pushes' flavour (chefs know this well) while acid 'pulls' flavour.

The opportunities to achieve tea and food pairings are unlimited. You can add lemon or honey (or both) to tea, introducing the sour as well as the sweet elements. And by adding milk to tea, you can modify an inherent component (bitterness) and change the texture – another match with food could be in the making.

MAKING THE MATCH

Fine, light, delicate teas complement light foods that have been poached or steamed. In general, green teas work with fish, poultry, rice salads and many seafood dishes. Here, the flavour of the tea does not overpower the food but adds a nuance in taste. Meanwhile, the tea's polyphenols match the texture of the poached meat or steamed fish.

Food should not overpower the tea or vice versa. Oolong teas make good matches with stronger flavoured seafood; dishes with less heavy sauces; fried foods, and dishes featuring ginger or berries.

Match black teas with heavier, fattier and richer foods. Black teas have more polyphenols and thus work with fatty foods such as creamy sauces, meat and cheese, as polyphenols are attracted to fatty proteins. Saliva is full of protein molecules and this is why the mouth experiences puckering and dry sensations when drinking tea with lots of polyphenols.

Lamb is a good example of a food with a high fatty-protein content; when eaten, it coats the mouth with fat. If tea is consumed alongside lamb, polyphenols attach themselves to the protein molecules and strip them from one's mouth, making a smooth match and leaving the palate refreshed, cleansed and ready for the next mouthful. Try black teas with red meats, mushrooms, spicy food and game.

The low country grown teas with lots of polyphenols and character are good matches for cheese cake, chocolate, cream sauces, curries and pastries whilst the mid-grown black teas suit fruity desserts, dishes featuring vanilla, nutty cakes and also spicy food. Where a dish is piquant (spicy-hot), sweeten the tea so the sweetness envelops the chilli hotness. Alternatively, adding lemon to tea has a palate cleansing effect on piquancy.

Pairings can go beyond simply matching flavour with flavour, texture with texture and component with component. You can mix and match food's flavours, components and textures with those of tea.

The key to making the match is to break down the flavour-texture-component profile of a particular tea and match or contrast it with at least two of the three (flavour, texture, component) of the food.

For example, a tea might have honey or mocha undertones (flavour) so might work with savoury as well as sweet dishes (components). Meanwhile, another tea might have the scent of vanilla or almond or jasmine flowers or mandarins (flavour) and would take to dark chocolate (flavour and texture). A nutty and grassy green tea would make a fabulous complement with brie cheese - not only in flavour, as the polyphenols in the tea will bind with the fat in the cheese to bring about a textural combination.

Note that not all flavour matches work. Oolong tea has a similar smoke profile to manufactured bacon bits (McCormick), but the smoke is intensified in the bits and overwhelms the tea. Yet when the same tea is paired with real bacon, it cuts through the fat to make a textural match.

Try, experiment and enjoy the experience.

The terms tannins and tea polyphenols are used interchangeably. Tea's polyphenols are sometimes described as tannic in taste. In essence, we are referring to the astringent taste of the polyphenols.

SUGGESTED MATCHES OF FOOD WITH TEA

Pairings need not be limited to just flavour with flavour, texture with texture and component with component. You can actually mix and match food's flavours, components and textures with those of tea.

The well travelled route of mint tea with dark chocolate never fails to delight, simply because the tea is not overwhelmed, but complements flavours in the chocolate. However, consider the following:

Earl Grey

Any spicy food
(*Green Curry, Szechuan Chicken, General Tsao's Spicy chicken, etc.*)

Pu-Erh

Earthy and meaty mushrooms

Assam

Common mushrooms/Paris mushrooms

Ceylon Young Hyson Green

Anchovy- based dishes

Oolong

Avocado-based dishes

Chun Mei

Creamy soups, seafood,

Low Grown Ceylon teas

Mexican dishes

Souchong

Smoked salmon

Lover's Leap Pekoe

Black truffled mushroom dishes








TEA WITH CHEESE

Conventionally, we think of wine as the perfect companion to cheese. However, tea with cheese also works. At a recent World Tea Expo, held in the US, it was demonstrated that tea can pair very well with cheese, as tea contains tannins which bind with the proteins and fat in cheese.

"I drink tea with my cheese. Each tea is so different and I find that I can pair Chinese teas with strong aromas with various cheeses. For cow's milk cheese from Burgundy and blue cheeses I like to serve strong teas alongside."
Gérard Poulard, Cheese Master, Hotel Le Meridien, Paris.



To create good pairings, it is important to feel and understand the relationship between the taste of cheese and tea. Tastes can be complementary – with similar flavours/textures/components working together. Or contrasting – where two distinct flavours/textures/components show off each other. Of course, you may also come across pairings that aren't good at all. Taste is subjective; but use the following guidelines.

-  Complex rich tasting stronger character tea stands up well to blue veined cheese that has an assertive taste.
-  Strong dark black tea with malty flavours marries well with creamy cheeses since the weight of the tea and the richness of the cheese are matched.
-  Malty/low grown teas pair well with strong flavoured cheeses – such as smoked cheeses, aged cheeses and the like.
-  Pepper in cheese renders a spicy note; so the cheese finds a good foil in a fruity tea, sweetened or not.
-  White and green teas contain less aggressive and less astringent tasting polyphenols, hence they are thought to be more difficult to pair with cheeses. Try green tea. Its vegetal notes mirror some of the grassy nuances in certain cream cheeses.
-  Green teas and Oolong teas take well to herbed cheese and flavoured cheeses.
-  Tea with lemon or herbal teas can be a good match to tangy goat or aged cheeses.

Tea can help mellow the sharpness of cheese or bring out more flavours in the cheese. On the other hand, cheese can show off the tasty maltiness of tea or contrast the bitterness of tea and so on. Full-bodied teas can stand up to the creaminess of cheese, yet delicate teas can be so pure that they cut through the creaminess of the cheese. All in all, there are many solutions to a pairing.

Try the following pairings:

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Blue Cheese with Souchong |  Pu Erh with aged cheddar cheese |
|  Goat Cheese with any green tea |  Oolong with cow's milk cream cheese |
|  Goat Cheese with sweetened Assam |  Sencha with Asiago cheese or Manchego cheese |
|  Chai/Ginger tea or cinnamon tea with smoked cheese |  Darjeeling with camembert cheese |

TEA WITH CHOCOLATE & DESSERTS

A surprising array of options presents itself with chocolate, depending on the strength of the chocolate dish. For example, with dark chocolate, try Earl Grey. For milk or white chocolate, try Darjeeling, Oolong or Sencha Green.

“There are so many different chocolate flavours nowadays, from cardamom to rosemary, and even chocolate appellations.”

Roberto Bava, President of the Italian Compagnia del Cioccolato. (Italian chocolate society)



CHOCOLATE WITH TEA

BY DILHAN FERNANDO, YOUNGER SON OF DILMAH FOUNDER MERRILL J. FERNANDO.

70% Dark Chocolate

Dombagastalawa Single Estate FBOP

85% Dark Chocolate

Single Estate Assam

Orange Dark Chocolate

Natural Ceylon Ginger Tea

Chilli Flavoured Chocolate

Naturally Minty Ceylon Pekoe

Mint Dark Chocolate

Mediterranean Mandarin Tea

99% Dark Chocolate

The First Ceylon Souchong

BALANCE

For dark chocolates, balance the chocolate's bitter finish with rich and robust teas that have prominent character.

In essence, the darker the chocolate (higher percentage of cocoa solids or chocolate liqueur), the richer the accompanying tea should be. Malty Dombagastalawa goes well with a 70% dark chocolate that has a hint of caramel; Assam, with a more definite thick, malt note would suit the 85% dark chocolate

with dried fruit, liquorice and tobacco overtones, whilst Ceylon Souchong (VSRTxs) which is a cinnamon smoked tea, with a pungent and rich taste marries well with 99% dark chocolate that is intense and full bodied.

FRUIT AND SPICE

Orange Dark Chocolate works well with Ceylon Ginger Tea because of the match of the two flavours. Ginger and orange match

each other elegantly, and the strength of the ginger and the tea with which it is fused, complement and challenge the Orange Dark Chocolate.

CONTRAST

Chilli flavoured chocolate is well embraced and subdued by the strong Minty Ceylon Pekoe, whilst mint dark chocolate is elegantly balanced by the flavours found in a Mediterranean Mandarin tea.

VARIOUS DESSERT AND TEA MATCHING SUGGESTIONS

Baklava

Darjeeling, Finest Ceylon Tippy, Oolong and various Green teas

Cheesecake

Sencha, Oolong, Green and Black teas, Assam and Keemun

Lemon Meringue or Key Lime Pie

Low elevation teas

Coffee or Mocha flavoured desserts

Assam, Pu-erh, Prince of Kandy

Apple Tart

Darjeeling, Chamomile

Pecan Pie

Oolong, any Ceylon tea, fruit teas

Chocolate Cake

Nuwara Eliya Pekoe

Tip: When some desserts are too sweet and do not work, sweeten your tea instead.

TEA & GASTRONOMY

“Tea and wine have been savoured since early civilisations. The best practices to make good wine and tea have slowly developed through the ages. Here are many differences in their preparation, style and regions. Tea is just like wine as it has the same dynamics in gastronomy.



Many people consider wine and food as the nucleus of gastronomy. It is widely known that combining the two demands attention. Not all combinations are favourable, yet it is interesting to note that we now know much more about what the deciding factors are in wine and food pairing.

We succeeded in finding a sound classification of flavour. It is advisable to use the term flavour for everything that is consumed. Subsequently, the word taste is used in regard to the human side, tasting. Humans taste, and products have flavour. This distinction implies something important: taste and tasting is by definition subjective but flavour is objective and can therefore be classified. Essential parameters in flavour classification are mouthfeel and flavour intensity.

What's in a cup of tea?

A typical brew of tea contains 0.35% tea solids in water. A group of chemical compounds known as polyphenols are the major component in the solid release into water.

Within mouthfeel, we distinguish between contracting and coating. Salty, acidity and dryness in foods and drinks are likely to contribute to contraction in the mouth. On the other hand, sweet and fat have a coating effect in the mouth. The physics definition of intensity of sound measures it in watts per unit area. To describe the strength of sound in terms other than strict intensity, one can use 'magnitude' 'strength', 'amplitude', or 'level'.

Similarly, flavour intensity is how much you taste. Within flavour intensity, it is useful to distinguish between 'fresh' and 'ripe' flavour tones. Green teas with no (or a light) fermentation will have a flavour intensity that is lower than black teas. In green teas, the fresh aromatic tones are predominant. Fruit additions like lemon or herbs like mint enhance the fresh side. Whereas black smoked teas will have ripe tones such as caramel. Yet, additions like milk or sugar influence the mouthfeel, causing the tea to exert a mouth coating effect.

This flavour classification proves to be very useful in understanding the dynamics between wine and food. It helps in finding good combinations. And as it is a general classification of flavour, the same theory can be applied to other products as well, for example beer and tea, of course!

Starting with breakfast. If you are a toast and jam lover, the teas with a fresh flavour profile will give you pleasure. If you are more into chocolate (that is consumed for breakfast in Europe), choose a tea with ripe flavour tones. With eggs however, the green and lightly fermented teas are again likely to be better appreciated than the black ones. What about tea with dinner? Now that you know the above, finding fitting teas with the menu can be just as exciting as finding the right wines."

Dr. Peter Klosse

*Academie voor Gastronomie, the Netherlands
Hotel Gastronomique De Echoput
www.academievoorgastronomie.nl
www.echoput.nl*

COOKING WITH TEA

For years, chefs have infused tea's aromatic flavours into food. Tea can be used as a marinade, rub, smoking ingredient or added directly to the cooking pot to impart dimension, depth and subtlety to familiar dishes. Many chefs claim that tea's tannins help to tenderise meats in a manner similar to red wine.

In Japan, confections or snacks may be served during chakai (literally "tea meeting") whilst chaji (literally "tea function") could feature a full-course meal called kaiseki where koicha (thick tea), and usucha (thin tea) are served.



The possibilities of tea and cooking are endless. These days, tea can be used in dips, dressings, jellies, jams, sorbets and sauces. The Chinese have used black tea to flavour and colour hard boiled eggs, or to smoke duck. Jasmine tea is often used to mask the fishy scent of seafood dishes. Contemporary cooking sometimes employs green tea's distinct taste to lend another flavour dimension to meats. Glazes can be added with ground Oolong tea; dried seafood can be rehydrated in herbal and green tea and fish can be poached in black or green tea.

Earl Grey tea has also been used in crème brûlée desserts and added to plum and apple sauces. Martha Stewart, doyen of gracious living suggests using ground Earl Grey tea to flavour tea cookies. She has even tweaked the recipe of traditional rich custard baked in small cups by replacing the typical flavouring ingredients of vanilla or chocolate with Earl Grey tea. The result? Pots de Crème of Earl Grey tea!

For the budding chef intending to use tea as an ingredient, here are some tips: Treat it tenderly – tea can burn easily, especially when used as a smoking agent. Use it judiciously as its flavour contribution can be potent, just like many herbs. Hence, tea should add new flavour, and not overwhelm the dish. Prepare tea parsimoniously since over-brewing can bring out many bitter polyphenols.

DILMAH TEA INSPIRED DINNER

BY DAVID HOWELL AT THE GRAND HYATT SINGAPORE.

Steamed Cod on a bed of Hiziki Seaweed

Lapsang Souchong Tea

Tea-smoked Magret de Canard au Jus & Purée of Italian White Beans and Grilled Baby Vegetables

Uva Tea

Cheese Duo of English Cheddar & King Island Camembert

Ceylon Vanilla Tea

Galle district OPI Tea

Dessert Trio of Apple Pie, Cream Cheese Cake & Rich Chocolate Cake

Chamomile Tea

First Ceylon Oolong Tea

Moroccan Mint Tea

TEA INSPIRED RECIPES

CHEF PETER KURUVITA

Flying Fish Restaurant Australia

DIMBULA FLUSH SOAKED QUAIL EGGS

Ingredients

2 tablespoons Dimbula flush tea
15ml dark Soya sauce
100ml light Soya sauce
2 cloves
2 star anise
1.5l chicken stock
20 quail eggs

Method

- ¹ Add all ingredients except the quail eggs into a pot and simmer for 20 minutes
- ² Place the eggs in the liquid and cook for a further 10 minutes
- ³ Remove eggs and gently crack eggs but do not peel
- ⁴ Return eggs into the liquid for 1 hour
- ⁵ Peel eggs when ready to serve



front Ceylon Young Hyson
Green *centre* Organic
Ceylon Flowery Pekoe
rear Ceylon Silver Tips

SPRING FLING

Ingredients

90ml Organic Chun Mei
Eyebrow green tea
2 lemon wedges
1 tablespoon sugar
20ml Plymouth Gin
20ml Pimms
A few Jasmine flowers
Dash, dry ginger ale
6 mint leaves
1 inch cucumber

Method

- ¹ Brew the tea, strain and leave to cool
- ² Muddle the lemon with sugar
- ³ Add the rest of the ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice
- ⁴ Shake and strain into a glass filled with ice cubes
- ⁵ Top off with additional dry ginger ale and garnish with mint sprig and cucumber

THE ROSEHIP AND HIBISCUS SORBET

Ingredients

1300ml water
50g Natural Rosehip with
Hibiscus tea
500ml Hibiscus Syrup
Juice of 2 medium limes
2 tablespoons Stabilizer

Method

- ¹ Bring water to boil and infuse the herb tea
- ² Leave to cool and strain
- ³ Mix in the other ingredients.
- ⁴ Freeze

TEA INSPIRED RECIPES

CHEF KURT SCHELLER

Honorary member of World Association of Chefs Societies (WACS)

STUFFED MUSHROOMS WITH DILMAH SENCHA GREEN TEA

Ingredients

- 20g butter
- 1 small chopped onion
- 12 pieces large mushrooms de Paris, separate the mushroom stems, chop and set aside
- 60g chopped walnuts
- 60g chopped hazelnuts
- 200ml strong Dilmah Sencha green tea
- 120g mozzarella, sliced
- 60g bread crumbs

Method

- ¹ Melt the butter in a pan and add the chopped onion. Saute until lightly browned
- ² Add the chopped mushroom stems and the nuts
- ³ Add the tea, cheese and bread crumbs at the end to get a smooth paste. Fill the mushrooms with this paste
- ⁴ Place the mushrooms in the oven for about 12 minutes at 160°C
- ⁵ Serve it with a sour cream sauce



front Green Tea with
Jasmine Flowers **centre**
Galle District OP | **rear**
Sencha Green Extra Special

SEARED DUCK BREAST WITH DILMAH PRINCE OF KANDY TEA CITRUS SALSA

Ingredients

4 duck breasts
2 tablespoons Creole rub
(or make your own with 1tsp each of salt, garlic powder, thyme, cayenne pepper and dried oregano leaves)
Dash of black pepper

For the salsa

2 red onions peeled and cubed
2 tomatoes, cubed
1 tablespoon chopped garlic
1 tablespoon orange juice mixed with 1 cup of strongly brewed Dilmah Prince of Kandy tea
2 tablespoons of orange marmalade
¼ cup, cubed pieces of oranges
¼ cup, cubed pieces of grapefruit
¼ cup, of chopped coriander leaves

Method

- ¹ Season the duck breasts with the Creole rub and pepper
- ² Fry the duck without any oil, until browned, in the saucepan for baking
- ³ Pour a little water in the saucepan and then cook in a pre-heated oven (275°F or degrees 135°C) for 3 hours, basting every half hour

For the salsa

- ¹ Mix salsa ingredients until well combined and serve it with the sliced duck



THE TASTE OF TEA

DISCOVERING TASTE





Tasting tea is not the same as drinking it. When you taste, you are conducting an objective study of a tea's character and quality. The taste of tea is a complex observation that involves a 'combination' of many sensory perceptions.

SENSATION

An important part of the taste 'combination' is sensation. This is perceived by the taste buds found on the tongue and other sensory tissues around the oral cavity. Here, non-volatile stimuli/sensations such as salty, sweet, acidic (sour) and bitter are perceived. Although all types of taste buds can be found in the mouth, the taste buds in very specific areas on the tongue are sensitive to specific stimuli.

"There are a thousand different appearances of tea leaves. The best teas are made from leaves with creases like the boot leather of Tartar horsemen; they curl like the gilded neck hair of Gwyneth Paltrow, gleam like the sun kissing Cate Blanchett's arms, and are wet and soft as a freshly bathed dog's nose."

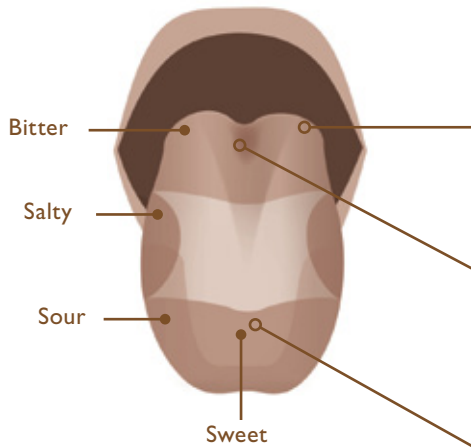
Contemporary misquote of Lu Yu, Tang Dynasty Scholar's description of tea. With apologies.

-  sweetness at the tip of the tongue
-  saltiness on either side and over the top of the tongue near the front
-  sourness along the sides of the tongue but further back
-  bitterness on the rear top of the tongue

Researchers confirm that there is a fifth taste called 'umami' that can be detected by the tongue. Umami was discovered by Professor Ikeda in the early 1900s and explains why certain foods taste savoury or delicious. The origin has been traced to natural amino acid, glutamic acid, or glutamates common in meats, cheese and other protein-heavy foods.

REGIONAL GUSTATORY PREFERENCES ON THE TONGUE

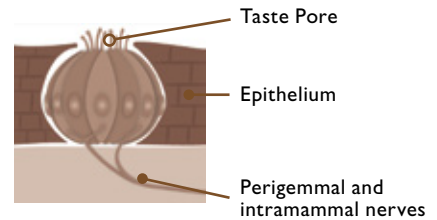
5 Basic Modalities of Taste.
Umami (taste of MSG) not mapped.



Distribution of Papillae

Humans have approximately 10,000 taste buds. Mostly on the tongue but also on the sides and roof of the mouth, and some on the pharynx and larynx.

Tastes Bud Contains 50-150 receptor cells



SOURCE: Adapted from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research

Taste receptors are located all over in the oral cavity but the majority of receptors are found in the various papillae of the tongue. Each papilla contains hundreds of taste buds, each with many taste cells. The papillae are of four kinds, each of which is simultaneously sensitive to two or more sensations:

Foliate (leaf-like)

Mostly on the lateral posterior surface of the tongue.

Circumvallate (large and flat)

Most sensitive to bitterness, forming a "V" near the junction of the posterior and middle third of the tongue.

Fungiform (mushroom-like)

Majority is found at the tip and central portion of the tongue, sensitive to sweetness but also saltiness and sourness.

Filiform

Most sensitive to textures, found on the dorsum of the tongue. These are the most numerous of the tongue papilla.

THE BASIC TASTES

The tea is in your mouth. Can you distinguish what components make up the taste of the tea? Is the tea cold or hot? Has sugar or lemon been added to it? What are the aromas that develop in your mouth? Do you detect the tactile sensations of the tea's tannins? Does it leave a lingering taste after you have swallowed it? These are some of the aspects of tea tasting.

Fine-tune your palate first by tasting the basic components of salt, acid, sugar and bitterness in water solutions.

Identification of Basic Components

Control: Water with nothing added to it

Saltiness: Make up a mild salt solution by adding 2g of salt to a litre of water

Tartness: Mix the juice of half a lemon to a litre of water

Sweetness: Dissolve 5g of sugar in a litre water

Bitterness: Add 100 drops of bitters in a litre of water

Gaiwan

Literally, "lidded bowl," is a practical alternative to brewing tea that was invented during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The gaiwan consists of a saucer, bowl, and lid. The lid is used to block the leaves or 'sieve' the leaves away from the pouring or drinking edge.



Ranking and Perception of Basic Tastes

Try the above, substituting water for tea. You can also vary the concentrations of sugar, salt, acid and quinine, making up four different concentrations of sugar in tea, four different concentrations of acid in tea and so on. The task is to rank them in order of concentration using your tasting ability.

Saltiness

0.2 g/L, 0.4g/L, 1.5g/L
and 2 g/L of salt

Sweetness

1g/L, 2g/L, 4g/L
and 8g/L of saccharose

Acidity

0.12g/L, 0.25g/L, 0.5g/L
and 1g/L of tartaric acid

Bitterness

1.2 g/L, 2.5g/L, 5g/L,
8g/L of quinine sulphate
*(tartaric acid and quinine sulphate
can be obtained at the chemists).*

MOUTHFEEL & TEXTURES

Besides tasting the four sensations, we can also detect texture. It is the sensory perception of touch/texture or tactile sensations on the surface of the oral cavity (including the filiform papilla that send signals via the trigeminal nerve to the brain about textural differences in food and tea).

This explains why we can discern certain types of sparkling mineral water as spritzig or bubbly; syrups as viscous and weighty; milk as creamy, and so on. In tea, the most common mouthfeel element is the astringency (dryness) and the textural slipperiness (that reaction which follows immediately after astringency – particularly when drinking a very good tea).

TASTE OF POLYPHENOLS

When tea leaf is steeped in hot water, it brews a “tart” (astringent) sensation which is a characteristic of polyphenols (tannins) in the tea. Polyphenols can taste bitter and also cause a dry, puckering mouth-feel. Polyphenols are found in seeds and stems of grapes, pomegranates, unripe persimmon and banana skin.

Choose one tea from each of the two groups and compare them for their polyphenol (tannic tasting) content.

Teas with Low Polyphenols

Nuwara Eliya Pekoe
Prince of Kandy
Silver Tips
Jade Butterfly
Darjeeling

Teas with High Polyphenols

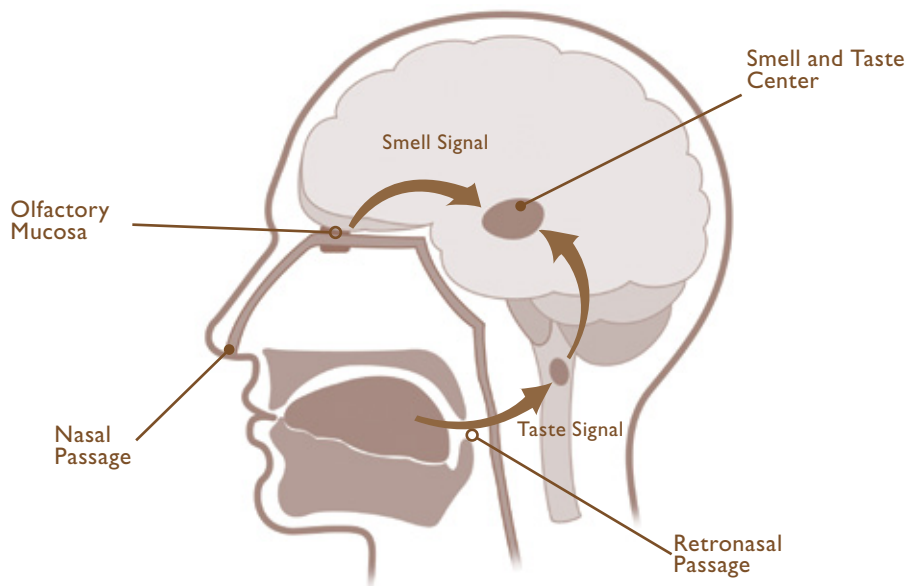
Pu Erh
Ceylon Low Elevation Tippy
Finest Ceylon
Galle OP I
Ceylon Supreme

THE SENSE OF SMELL

The sense of smell is another important piece of the taste 'combination'. Scent or aroma, is one's reaction to the stimulus of volatile components found in the tea. This reaction is the result of two operations – sniffing via the nasal passage and detecting aromas via the mouth.

By sniffing, the volatile components evaporate up into the nasal cavity to the olfactory mucosa and the brain sorts out what smells they are. In the latter, when air and tea is sucked into the mouth, or when the tea is sipped and swallowed, internal pressure in the mouth forces the aromas through the retronasal passage and up to the olfactory mucosa so that the brain can sort out the smell.

The human smell / olfactory system can distinguish thousands of odours.



It is made up of the nose and the olfactory bulb, a brain structure just above the nose. Essentially, the nose's olfactory mucosa contains specialised sensory nerve cells, or neurons, with hair-like fibers called cilia. Essentially an odour molecule binds to these cilia and triggers the neuron. The neuron sends a nerve fiber called an axon (the signal) to the olfactory bulb, and the signal is interpreted as a specific aroma or smell.

Aromas can reach the olfactory mucosa directly via the nasal passage (by sniffing) and through the retronasal passage (via the mouth). As tea is sipped with air, aromas are intensified. If the tea is swallowed, internal pressure in the mouth forces the aromas into the olfactory mucosa. The 'signals' are then sent via neurones to the olfactory bulb. The brain then interprets the aromas and smells.

THE SCENT OF TEA

Smell the dry leaf of various teas to determine if you can differentiate amongst them. Begin with teas that have had oils, flowers or flavour-scents added to them. As you progress, you should try 'nosing' various black teas to see if you can name them.

Dry Leaf Flight 1:

Ginger, Mediterranean Mandarin,
Rose with French Vanilla

Dry Leaf Flight 2:

Ceylon Cinnamon, Italian Almond,
First Ceylon Souchong

Dry Leaf Flight 3:

Vanilla Ceylon,
Earl Grey, Mint Leaf.

Peter was not very well during the evening. His mother put him to bed, and made some chamomile tea: 'One table-spoonful to be taken at bed-time.'

Beatrix Potter

THE VARIOUS TEAS

Tea is not just about the drink but the total experience of selecting the type, preparing, serving and taking time to enjoy it, as suggested by Tomislav Podreka in *Serendipitea*, when he wrote. “Tea kettles whistle... signaling the moment when life slows down for a short while, when we can relax, (to) enjoy the tea.”



front Ceylon Sliver Tips,
center Pear Dragon,
rear Jade Butterfly

UNPROCESSED TEA

Ceylon Silver Tips is one of the most sought-after teas in the world, as it is only made in miniscule quantities and its production requires a supreme level of skill and artistry rarely seen in tea manufacturing.

The unopened buds are picked from selected bushes and coddled in silken pouches. They are then shielded from direct sunlight and left to wither and mature naturally. A lot of care must be taken for the buds to mature with minimal oxidation – if there is too much humidity in the air, the buds will rot. Insufficient humidity will cause the buds to dry out too quickly.

At the right moment, the leaves undergo a very light baking to complete the process. Silver Tips is distinguished from other teas by its tapered needle-like shape and silvery down. Brews are made using two teaspoons of white tea per cup, with 80°C (180°F) water (not boiling), and should be steeped for three to 12 minutes.

The liquor of white tea and unprocessed tea is very light and pale yellow. Its aromas are delicate and the tea tastes mild and lightly sweet. Other unprocessed teas include the Darjeeling White Treasure, hand-rolled Jasmine Pear Dragon containing natural Jasmine petals and White Litchee No. 1 that transforms into a flower when brewed.

“Each cup of tea represents an imaginary voyage.”
Catherine Douzel

White Litchee No. 1

This tea brings with it a visual treat. The tea is made from tea buds which are an inch or so long and then tied into a large ‘pearl’. When made, the tea pearl unfurls, one bud at a time, transforming over 30 seconds or so into a flower of buds.



GREEN TEA

Although green tea originated from China, it has become synonymous with Japanese tea since it is the most commonly consumed tea in Japan.

The art of rolling green tea

Japanese green teas are usually formed into the shape of pine needles. In China, teas are hand rolled into pearls, knotted or even twisted into various shapes. As its name suggests, Chun Mei 'Eyebrow' tea demands great skill to hand roll the leaves to the desired shape at the correct temperature for the exact length of time. Maofeng literally translated means 'hairpoint' and takes its name from the ultra fine strips of hand-rolled leaf.

It is made from hand-picked leaves that are laid out to wither for eight to 24 hours so that most of the water within evaporates. In order to neutralise the enzymes and thus prevent oxidation, the leaves are steamed or pan-fried. The leaves are then rolled up in various ways and with differing tightness before undergoing a final drying. Green tea is unfermented (unoxidised). Since no oxidation takes place, it retains its green appearance.

Green tea should be brewed with 82°C to 88°C (180°F to 190°F) water and be steeped for only two to three minutes. Steeping it for too long or in overly hot water brings out bitterness and astringency.

There is a whole world of unique tastes within the green tea category. Choices include Ceylon Whole Leaf Green, Ceylon Young Hyson Green, Sencha Green Extra Special, Japan Sencha Extra Special, Mingmei Famous Plum Green, Jasmine Extra Special No.1 Green, Maofeng Fragrant Green, Organic Chun Mei Eyebrow Green and Organic Ceylon Green.



front Green Tea with Jasmine flowers, **center** Ming Mei Famous Plum, **rear** Organic Ceylon Green Pekoe

SEMI PROCESSED TEA

Oolong in Chinese means 'black dragon' and originated in the 18th century in the Fujian province of China.

The backstory tells of a tea farmer in Fujian who was tending to his withering tea leaves when a black snake emerged from a tea plant and frightened him away. He returned after a few days to find that his tea leaves had been oxidised under the sun. Out of curiosity he brewed them into a pleasant tasting tea. He named the process after the black snake that he mistook for a dragon ('wu loong'). Oolong is semi-processed (semi-fermented). Freshly picked shoots are withered and the leaves are rolled and heated in a warm room, shaded from light so that they oxidise quickly. The leaves are dried and then packed.

The taste of Oolong tea is somewhat between black tea and green tea, reflecting the semi-fermented condition of the leaves. Oolong tea's liquor has green hues and is milder in sweet aromas than black tea, yet comes across as earthy and less stridently grassy than typical green teas.

Brew a teaspoon in a cup of water at 95°C (203°F) and infuse for five minutes. It is best enjoyed without milk or sugar, all day long as the tea has a sweet, smooth aftertaste. Two Oolong teas to try are The First Ceylon Oolong from the Galle District and Single Estate Oolong Leaf which comes from China.



front and rear
First Ceylon Oolong
center Single Estate Oolong

BLACK TEA

Black tea is made by firstly withering the leaves. Leaves are then rolled or tumbled. This bruises the leaf surface, breaking down their cells and releasing enzymes that darken when exposed to the air.

Lapsang Souchong

Legend has it that during the Qing Dynasty in China's Fujian Province, an army unit overran and camped out in a tea factory and so production of tea was suspended. Eventually the soldiers left. Returning tea factory workers realised that if they dried tea leaves in the customary way they would be late to arrive at the market. To hasten the drying process, the workers lit open fires of pine wood and the result was a tea with a smoky aroma. Today, black tea leaves can be smoked over pine (Single Estate Lapsang Souchong), cinnamon (First Ceylon Souchong) or cypress wood fires producing not only a smoky tea but one with variations of the distinctive tarry notes.

Fermentation or oxidation occurs throughout the rolling process, turning the tea leaves from green to a coppery brown. Finally, the leaves are fired (baked at 90°C to 120°C) which ends the fermentation.

The taste of black tea varies widely and depends on where it is grown – climate and elevation of the estate are interrelated in Sri Lanka and they affect the personality of tea – its appearance, colour, strength, pungency, flavour, infusion (the infused leaf) and quality (desirable characteristic in the liquor, seasonal quality characteristics, etc.) Choose from a veritable assortment of teas – Ceylon Supreme Single Origin, Nuwara Eliya Pekoe, Galle District OPI, Dombagastalawa Single Estate FBOP, Ceylon Low Elevation Tippy FF, Finest Ceylon Tippy FBOPF, Prince of Kandy, Single Estate Assam, Keemun Special Leaf and Pu Erh No. 1 Leaf.



front Galle OPI center
Nuwara Eliya Pekoe **rear**
Organic Ceylon Flowery Pekoe.

RED, FLAVOURED AND HERBAL INFUSIONS

Tea drinkers can also have fun with various teas and delight in their multitude of tastes. Teas can be perfumed or scented with flowers such as Green Tea with Jasmine.

Ceylon Ginger is a tea embracing yin and yang (complementary opposites in Chinese philosophy). The warming character of ginger is balanced by a bright, high-grown Ceylon Tea that has 'cooling' properties. Other teas are aromatised with oils. For example, bergamot orange oil was added to a blend of black teas and presented as a gift to the 2nd Earl Grey, British Prime Minister during the 1830s, giving rise to the name of Earl Grey tea.

Sipping Moroccan Mint Green Tea instantly transports the drinker to Morocco, with the combination of a grassy green tea and the sweet fragrance of peppermint leaves.

Then there is the vitamin C and antioxidant power in Natural Rosehip with Hibiscus, a perfect infusion to start your morning. Or have a cup of the relaxing, naturally caffeine-free infusion of a Pure Chamomile Flowers to wind down the work day.

You can also enjoy a cup of Rooibos, the famous herbal infusion made from plants that grow only in a small area in the Western Cape of South Africa, with a splash of milk. Or have it cold, with a squeeze of lime and a trickle of Manuka honey.

There is also a range of lovely teas to be enjoyed from Italian Almond and Rose with French Vanilla, to Ceylon Cinnamon and more.



front Moroccan Mint,
center Natural Rosehip
with Hibiscus, **rear** Ceylon
Cinnamon Spice.

ORGANISE A TASTING SESSION

Gathering a group of friends together for a tea tasting session is a fun way to learn about tea, but make sure you establish a theme for the tasting as it should not be a free-for-all session. Here are some suggestions.

See Annex A for more tasting themes.

THE EXPLORATEUR

Set out to explore the taste differences between various types of tea (green vs. black vs. Oolong)

BLACK IS BLACK

Black teas are all similar... or are they? Brew a selection from different countries and regions (e.g. Keemun, Ceylon Supreme, Single Estate Assam) to find out.

TURN TERROIRIST

Trace the effects of growing tea at different elevations (Yata Watte vs. Meda Watte vs. Uda Watte vs. Ran Watte) and regions – how climate and soil affect the flavour of the tea from different regions of Sri Lanka, demonstrating distinctively different personalities. Visit www.watteboutiquetea.com.

BECOME A DETECTIVE

Choose your teas to showcase various single estates (e.g. Lover's Leap, Somerset, Dombagastalawa and Nilagama).

The French concept of terroir refers to the combination and interaction of soil, climate, hydrology, geography and grape variety that go towards creating the final product – the wine. This concept can be applied to a variety of food products from chocolate to olive oil, from cheese to tea. Hence we coined the word Terroirist

front Jasmine Pear Dragon White Tea (a hand rolled white tea with natural Jasmine petals, yields a light pale yellow liquor that complements creamy salads, steamed fish or light dishes)



LEAF QUALITY

Professional tea buyers will share that besides tasting tea, it is also very important to look, smell and touch the leaves when assessing the quality of teas.

WHAT A TEA EXPERT CAN TELL FROM LOOKING AT THE DRY LEAF

Size	Twisted	Mixed	Corresponds to the region
It should fit the characteristics of the grade. Uniformity in size is good.	The best versions are well-twisted and clean with no stalks or smaller leaves.	It should not contain leaves of different sizes.	Low country teas should be black in colour; high grown tea can have some brown colour.

TOUCH OF THE DRY LEAF

A professional might roll some tea together between his thumb and forefinger to 'feel' the leaf, gauge its weight, moisture and texture, as well as assess how well-rolled it is. If the leaves are brittle, they may be over-dried, have lost too much moisture or are not very fresh. This means the resulting tea will not taste its best. If it is too moist, however, it may have been stored improperly in a humid environment. If the tea is well-rolled, a large pinch of tea can be lifted between the fingers and it will not fall.

Here are some common terms to describe the sensation of touching the leaf.

 Silky	 Dry
 Dusty	 Moist
 Supple	 Heavy
 Crunchy	 Light

Some experts even 'listen' to tea. They crush a few leaves between the fingers (as close to the ear as possible) and note if the leaves make a limp or crackling sound!

clockwise from left to right

Ceylon Young Hyson Green, Jasmine Extra Special 1 Green, Maofeng (Maofeng is a term in tea manufacture denoting the picking of a bud and two leaves of equal length.), Organic Ceylon Green Pekoe



SOME TEA LEAF GRADES

There are up to 27 leaf sizes and grades. Here are some common ones.

Dust

Dust (D)

The smallest of the grades and is so small as to resemble actual dust. A good dust should be grainy, very black and free from fibre and grit. Usually makes for the strongest brew and flavour, although lacking subtlety.

Broken

Broken Orange Pekoe (B.O.P)

A true natural B.O.P. should consist of only that leaf broken up in the rollers which passes through a No.10 mesh, but not through No.18.

Flowery Broken Orange Pekoe (F.B.O.P)

This is usually derived from the early dhools, and must contain a reasonable amount of tip. The particles are longer than an average B.O.P. and must have a well twisted appearance. This grade is marketed more for its appearance than liquor.

Broken Pekoe (B.P)

About the same size as B.O.P. sometimes slightly larger, easily recognizable by the cut ends of the particles. It is not so black as the average B.O.P. grade, has no tip and consists chiefly of cut stalk.



Broken Orange Pekoe Fannings (B.O.P.F)

A small sized grade, derived from the finer leaf and is black in appearance. It is grainy when separated by a smaller mesh and leafy when it is larger in size. Owing to its rapid brewing properties a fannings grade gives strong, coloury liquors.

Flowery Broken Orange Pekoe Fannings (F.B.O.P.F)

That part of a B.O.P.F. with an abnormal amount of tip.

Broken Pekoe Fannings (B.P.F)

This grade is generally of about the same size as B.O.P.F. but very much inferior in appearance. It is brownish in colour and very flaky.

Broken Mixed (B.M)

A small sized grade, derived from the finer leaf and is black in appearance. It is grainy when separated by a smaller mesh and leafy when it is larger in size. Owing to its rapid brewing properties a fannings grade gives strong, coloury liquors.

Leaf

Orange Pekoe (O.P)

Contains no tip and is thin and light in liquor. It is slightly longer than F.B.O.P. and must be better twisted and more wiry. It consists of very tightly rolled leaf and mostly long tender stalk.

Flowery Pekoe (F.P)

Leaf that is too large to pass through No.10 mesh is given the name F.P. but it must be even, curly and free from stalk and flake. Consists of leaf that is well twisted and has a somewhat shotty appearance.

Pekoe (P)

The largest of the leafy grades and in the true sense should be entirely shotty in character. The Pekoe nowadays, is inclined to contain a considerable quantity of 'cut leaf' and may be slightly open.



from left to right
Dust No. 1, Finest Broken Orange Pekoe Flowery, Pekoe, Orange Pekoe 1, Orange Pekoe A

HOW PROFESSIONALS TASTE TEA

The 'taster' spoons the 'liquor', sucking and slurping it into his mouth at a speed of 200 kilometers per hour, whereupon the tea explodes into a fine mist at the back of his palate. The liquid is then expectorated into a spittoon and the pronouncement is made.

EVERY LEAF TELLS ITS STORY

The tea liquid or liquor is then decanted into a bowl. Like the wine drinker who scrutinises the label, cork and sediment from a mature bottle, tea tasting is not deemed complete until the dregs or wet leaves are inspected.

The size of the infused leaf provides clues to the quality of the tea. For example, a dry leaf may appear small, but after cupping (brewing), may reveal itself to be made up of large pieces, indicating that the leaf was well-twisted. The colour of the infused leaf however, tells little about the quality of the tea but serves more as an identifying aspect.

Tea and wine tasting have much in common. When wine tasters assess a wine in the mouth, they draw in some air so that the aroma molecules can be sensed; then the wine is swished and slurped to determine flavours, texture and weight before it is expectorated. Here, vineyard owner Misha Wilkinson applies her wine tasting skills to tea tasting.



The taster can further appraise the quality of the tea by smelling the aroma of the dregs. Each type of leaf has a signature scent – some are vegetal, while others are flowery, fruity or even malty. Secondary aromas such as smoke, oil or toast, reveal if the leaf is old or new, how much it was 'fermented' (enzymatic oxidation of leaves in a humid, warm environment) or how strongly it was 'fired' (dried, such as over a fire or in an oven).

*"Tea is drunk to forget
the din of the world"*
Tien Yiheng

When the leaves have cooled a little, the 'middle aroma' discloses other characteristics such as the leaf's purity and quality grade. And later, as if to confirm his notion, the taster looks for a lingering fragrance in the cold tea leaves. Inferior quality leaves will be bereft of aroma at this juncture.

But the above only tells the story of orthodox or black teas. There is another world of smells and tastes with unfermented green teas, semi-fermented (Oolong) teas, unprocessed white teas and even fruit and scented teas.

WHEN LOOKS ARE EVERYTHING

Each type of tea produces a different liquor colour. Ignoring the variations introduced by incorrect brewing, lightly fermented tea looks greener while the liquor of more heavily fermented tea has a predisposition towards red. Furthermore, the way the tea is fired will influence the clarity of the liquor.

Tea that is fermented for a longer period will be darker. Crystalline clear liquor indicates good oxidation or fermentation, whatever the level of darkness or colour of the liquor. So when the liquor is dull, it could indicate excessive oxidation. When the tea has cooled and becomes creamy, experts look at the precipitate. Some teas cream faster than others and the professional takes note of each tea's creaming nature.

Determining the 'terroir' of tea challenges tea aficionados as much as it confounds budding connoisseurs in wine. What is 'terroir'? It is a French term that reflects the unique interaction of natural factors (climate, soil, water, wind, etc.) and human skills that create a definable characteristic of a specific wine-growing location.

Tea also varies in flavour and characteristics according to the type of soil, altitude and climate of the area in which it is grown. Tea from the highest elevations is elegant and light when compared to the robust, dark-coloured low elevation grown tea that has a certain attractiveness despite a 'coarseness' of taste.

Furthermore, the location where tea is grown determines its style. Southern Indian tea is considered fruity, but tea from further north in Darjeeling is malty. In Sri Lanka, malty teas are made from low elevation tea gardens and fruity teas come from the higher elevations.

The season of picking matters too. Grapes picked late in the season result in full-bodied wines. Similarly, Darjeeling tea picked during the monsoon period is so strong that it is used for blending. The same bush plucked at the beginning of the season in April or in the 'first flush' yields a flowery tea with an astringent constituency.

Nosing and tasting tea is not unlike wine tasting, where tasters identify aromas of flowers, fruits and even nuts. These aromas ascend through the internal nasal cavity, signalling the various fragrances to the brain. Like wine, some teas smell superb as dry leaf but develop little perfume when infused and sipped, due to factors such as rainy weather or poor-quality raw material.

Finally, the sensations and components of astringency, sweetness, bitterness, fullness, lightness, suppleness, liveliness, length of taste and how all of these combine to produce the overall effect, enables the tea taster to make his judgment.

THE THREE AROMAS OF TEA

The taste of tea is a complex perception as it is influenced by several factors. The type of tea bush and its growing conditions (elevation and climate) contribute to a background taste. For example, tea grown at sea level is often malty while the same tea bush that is grown at higher elevations is fragrant with a refreshing greenness. Maltiness or greenness are primary aromas.

Some teas have a unique primary aroma. Good tea from Darjeeling for example often has a muscatel note. Building upon the background aromas is the secondary aroma. These aromas range from freshly snipped herbs and grass to hay and straw. These aromas can be strong or subtle depending on how much withering and fermentation the plucked leaf is subjected to.

Small and seemingly insignificant occurrences can affect the final taste of tea. If for example, the plucked leaf is not processed but kept in containers and exposed to the sun, the resulting tea will taste different from what was intended. Rainfall around the time of plucking can change the moisture content of the leaf. Teas made from leaves with high moisture content will taste different from teas made from a bush that has enjoyed sunshine, even for a day.

Tertiary aroma is what develops when tea is stored. The tertiary aromas apply mainly for aged tea such as Pu-erh. Through storage, Pu-erh tea typically takes on a darker colour and mellower aromas. The exposure to air gives the tea an earthy flavour. Indeed, Pu-erh properly stored in different environments can develop different aromas and tastes at different rates due to environmental differences in ambient humidity, temperature, and other factors.

Note that aromas of tea can change even after the tea is packaged. Tea easily absorbs moisture and odours, so it is essential to keep it in a cool dry place, away from any strong smelling items. When exposed to air, tea leaves, including its aroma, will quickly diminish in quality.



DIMENSIONS OF TASTE

THE LEAF & THE LIQUOR

THE DRY LEAF

Observe the size of the leaf using some of the tips presented in the chapter on Leaf Quality. Are the leaves small (broken) or are they large? Are all the pieces the same size or are they different? Leaf size is an important consideration in tea grading. However, large leaves do not necessarily mean that the resulting tea will taste better. In fact, some of the best tasting teas are made from smaller, broken leaves.

THE INFUSED LEAF AND THE LIQUOR

Appreciation of tea begins with the dry leaf, but even more so, with the infused leaf. The wet leaf takes on a sheen and luster that is appreciated. Its colour also develops. Do leaves take on a reddish tinge; do they become green, or a darker brown? There are virtually limitless permutations and combinations of colours, so take note of what you see and describe it in your own terms. Leaves usually expand quite significantly in size and also change in appearance. You can note the size and shape, and whether there are other bits of stem.

COLOUR, SHADE AND REFLECTION

Each kind of tea will produce a different colour liquor – depending on its origin and fermentation time (fermented tea tend to show darker liquor). Brewing the tea can also influence its colour.

Besides that, tea colour also has clarity or brightness. As such, look at its reflection or rim of the tea where you can note if one tea is brighter and clearer than another.

The colour of tea is intricately connected to experiencing its wonderful flavour – it is not different from appreciating the colour and form of say, a cake, anticipating its taste before you actually put it into your mouth.

THE EYE

“After smelling the fragrance, appreciating the appearance of the dry leaf and seeing the beauty of its form after infusion, you should allow yourself to experience the inner beauty of the tea leaf—the colour and flavour of the infusion...”

*From The Modern Art of Tea
by Cai Rongzhang*

top left Jade Butterfly,
top right Ceylon Whole
Leaf Green, **middle left**
Jasmine Pear Dragon,
middle right White
Litchee No. 1, **bottom left**
Single Estate Assam,
bottom right Ceylon
Silver Tips



RANGE OF TEA COLOURS





THE NOSE & THE PALATE

To appreciate the aroma of the tea liquor, raise the cup in front of your nose; the smell of hay or grass may be immediately apparent. The aroma will disperse and you will want to experience the tea in your mouth. Take a mouthful and hold it in your mouth without moving it, letting the aroma ascend. Move it vigorously to your cheeks, and with the tea still in your mouth, suck in some air, so that the aroma can move to your nasal cavity. Finally, swallow the tea and sit back and enjoy, as the tea will have spoken to you.

TASTING TECHNIQUE OF PROFESSIONAL TEA TASTERS

Raise a spoonful of tea to the edge of your lower lip. Take an inward short and powerful breath of air that will spray the tea into your mouth. The aim here is to spray the tea so that it will hit the back of your palate. After the spraying, move the tea around your mouth, sucking in further short bursts of air, in order to release the more delicate characteristics inherent in the tea. Make as if you are chewing. Note the aromas and flavours. Expel the remains into a spittoon.



front Ceylon Low Elevation
Tippy **rear** Keemun
(Alongside Pu Erh, Keemun,
a black tea from Anhui
province, is designated as one
of China's ten great teas.)



FLAVOUR INTENSITY

Flavour intensity describes the level of concentration or power of the prominent aromas and flavours or a combination of them. (Floral, Spicy, Fruity non-citrus, Herbaceous, Citrus, Meat, Earth & Marine, Wood & Smoke, Caramel & Other Food). The levels can be described within a range.

Undetectable Flavour

fades immediately/
barely perceptible/
not detectable

Light Flavour

smelling and tasting
reveals a flavour but
it is not recognizable

Moderate Flavour

perceived and identified

Strong Flavour

unmistakably perceived
and at an emphasized level

Intense and Powerful Flavour

overpowering



COMPARING THE FLAVOUR INTENSITIES OF VARIOUS TEAS

Brew up the following teas.

- a. Darjeeling White Treasure b. Original Earl Grey c. Nuwara Eliya Pekoe

Arrange them in order of strong flavour intensity, medium flavour intensity, and weak flavour intensity.

The Earl Grey would be the strongest, followed by the Nuwara Eliya Pekoe and then the Darjeeling White Treasure. In most cases, flavoured teas have a strong flavour intensity.

POLYPHENOLS

Polyphenols (tannins), the most common secondary plant compound among all botanical life in the world, comprise the majority of many victuals – tea, coffee, chocolate, wine, and fruit, to name a few – that we ingest on a daily basis. Tea polyphenols can be described for its level of bitterness and type of texture.



LENGTH & AFTERTASTE

What makes you smile after a drink or after swallowing some food? In food science, 'length' is defined as the persistency in flavour, and 'aftertaste' refers to the impressions that linger after the food/liquid is swallowed or expelled. In the realm of wine and food, a long and pleasant aftertaste is a positive aspect.

For tea, the short length of taste and aftertaste can be defined when tea lasts for one second in the mouth. 'Long lasting' teas can leave a pleasant aftertaste of more than three seconds after it is swallowed.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

How does a tea get its unique taste? Why do two teas, produced in different parts of the world, taste different, even if the processing was identical?

"I'm not interested in immortality but only in tea flavour."

Lu Tung, poet and tea lover, Tang Dynasty.

Tea connoisseurs like to allude to a mystical quality that differentiates teas. And there is a term borrowed from the French called 'terroir' (pronounced tear-wah) that perhaps sums up why no two teas are alike. Terroir describes the sum of all the natural features of a tea garden – aspect, altitude, topography of the land, geology, soil depth and type, general climate, and microclimate – all factors that impart the distinctiveness to a tea by influencing the growing conditions of a tea bush. Tea bushes can be cultivated on various soils, as long as they are acidic – from sandy and alluvial to stony and volcanic.

But compare the same variety of tea grown on two different soils and you will find them to be different. For example, the soil composition in the Low Country growing areas of Sri Lanka contribute to a generally stronger, and prominently earthy character than the same grades of tea manufactured identically from the cooler, higher elevation areas.



This is the first aspect of terroir. Tea also responds to seasonal change. The gardens in Northern India, China and Japan are subject to different seasons and so the tea bush goes through a dormant period where they shut down for winter. The first shoots of spring have more aromatic compounds and so the tea is usually more fragrant but with a lightness of being. Furthermore, the temperatures, sunlight and rainfall of each season are different and so the taste and smell of the tea will be different. Summer harvested teas, because of higher temperatures, will show stronger aromas.

In Sri Lanka, the climate is tropical, so tea plants do not go into dormancy. Tea is picked throughout the year. It is, however, the unique advantage of tropical weather conditions combined with different altitudes of terrain which yield distinctive teas of various aromas, flavours and tastes. Microclimatic conditions such as these are another aspect of terroir.

In higher altitudes, the tea leaves produce more amino acids, carbohydrates, minerals, caffeine and different polyphenols, resulting in a tea that is elegant in style. Another reason is that at higher altitudes, the ambient temperatures are lower and tea leaves develop less colour and the resulting tea will have a lighter taste. The converse is true for tea leaves picked from gardens in lower altitudes where there is more sunshine – the colour of the liquor is deeper, darker and the tea itself is almost sweeter with a round but satisfying astringent taste.

Even the directional orientation of the tea plantation, for instance whether it is orientated to the morning or afternoon sun, makes a difference. If the bush receives more sun, it grows faster, more leaves are produced and ultimately the taste of the tea will be different because different aromatic compounds develop in the leaves.

Then there are other aspects to consider. Are the gardens facing north east or facing south west– for the Monsoon brings with it microclimatic changes that also affect the taste of tea. Man-made factors also bring subtle differences to the final product – the number of bushes planted per acre (density); the yield (how often a bush is picked) and the provision of natural shade from neighbouring trees. The ideal situation is for graduated shade.

The ideal shade trees will have long roots that absorb nutrients from the deeper reaches rather than compete with the tea plant for nutrients. And when the shade trees shed their leaves, the leaves will decompose and turn into the 'top' soil, that can be used by the tea plant. Yet the shade trees have to be managed. In the colder high elevations, the canopy of the shade trees may need trimming – to allow more air and sunlight so that frost does not settle on the tea bushes.

If you get the chance, visit Nuwara Eliya, in the heart of Sri Lankan hill country. Here, the air is clean and crisp. The cool breeze that blows in from the cloud-crowned Pidurutalagalla range caresses you as you take in the breathtaking views of mountains and undulating hills, carpeted by velvety green tea plants. Here and there, a brook bubbles, yonder, you find tumbling waterfalls. A mist descends from the wooded wilderness, and you make out the cypress tree line, and the air is scented with wild mint and eucalyptus.

TEA

Meda Watte (middle garden)

ESTATE/DISTRICT

Kandy District

TERROIR

Area is safeguarded from strong monsoon winds

TASTING NOTES

Colour: Dark golden brown.

Aromas and flavours

Medium bodied, deliciously dry and generous with biscuity taste. Depth of flavours with some herbs, earth and wood nuances. Moderate flavour intensity, medium texture, very slight bitterness, moderate length and good, balanced aftertaste.

Overall: A handsome and impeccable tea.

2000-3000 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL

TEA

Ran Watte (golden gardens)

ESTATE/DISTRICT

Lover's Leap Estate

TERROIR

Least acidic of soils. Coolest area, with pine and citrus trees

TASTING NOTES

Colour: Light brown-yellow with green nuances

Aromas and flavours

Hint of smoke, mocha, florals and dry leaf. Bright, breezy, effortlessly light and snappy yet with tannins of fortitude. Long lasting in aftertaste. Only a trace of bitterness, very light texture and flavours.

Overall: Refined, exquisite and alluring tea.

6500 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL

Could all this, have endowed Nuwara Eliya teas with its unique character, lauded by all the connoisseurs of tea in the world? What about the Kandy district, the Dimbula district, Uva and all the others; each unique? The next time you enjoy some tea, take a moment to reflect on the hidden subtleties of the tea. What you discover can surprise you!

THE INFLUENCE OF CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY.

Ceylon teas are a product of infinite variety. Diversity of mother plant, soil, altitude, climatic changes, wind velocity and seasons all play their part in infusing the various degrees of quality to tea. Brew four cups of tea, one from each estate/district that represent the various elevations and savour the differences!

"Yata Watte was chocolatey, raisiny and astringent, and best enjoyed with milk and sugar. Uda Watte, had strong tannins and a bitter finish and was quite liked but it was after tasting Meda Watte, rounder and much more elegant, that it became the overall favourite."

*Philip Laffer,
Winemaker,
Jacobs Creek Wines
& Yeo Khim Noy,
Brand Manager,
Jacobs Creek Wines.*

TEA

Uda Watte (high garden)

ESTATE/DISTRICT

Dimbulla Estate

TERROIR

Western district, mild effects of the SW monsoon (March to May)

TASTING NOTES

Colour: Medium brown with tints of orange.

Aromas and flavours

An almost savoury taste. Fruity with a hint of herbs, apple, exotic perfume with a 'balance' in taste from the ample tannins, strong but not brooding. Hint of bitterness, short finish and suited to lovers of light style teas.

Overall: A tea that is delicate, radiant and elegant.

4000-5000 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL

TEA

Yata Watte (low garden)

ESTATE/DISTRICT

Galle District

TERROIR

High pH, high calcium soils, most sunshine, least rain

TASTING NOTES

Colour: Dark brown almost chocolatey.

Aromas and flavours

Nuances of smoke, spice, fruit, herbs and minerals. Round tannins, full bodied, with a big structure and fleshy. Moderately high flavour intensity, good almost chewy texture and moderate bitterness. Long, aftertaste.

Overall: An authentic, suave and stately tea.

1000 FEET ABOVE SEA LEVEL

WATTE TEAS

Most teas on supermarket shelves today, are blends from many origins. In taste, most offer an almost generic taste - similar across different brands and varieties. If tea were that basic, there would be no pleasure in this beguiling herb. Tea should offer a spectrum of flavours, aromas and infusions. Hence in 2002, Watte, Single Region Tea was introduced.

THE WATTE SERIES

Watte series refers to a range of four teas that runs completely contrary to the prevailing direction of the industry. Consider the Watte series teas, which took the most part of five years in preparation prior to launch, as the 'private reserve' of the teamaker. Each tea is different and each comes from a distinct premier tea growing regions of Ceylon. Hence in 2002, Merrill J. Fernando introduced Watte, Single Region Tea.

Watte series tea is sourced from 18 Dilmah tea gardens within four different plantation regions. Because of the individual growing environs, each single region tea possesses its own bouquet, mouthfeel and flavour – just like wine, from different vineyards and terroir, or chocolate from different estates, cheese from various geographical regions and oysters from different waters.



In the previous page, we illustrated the 'terroir' aspects (soils, effects of climate, growing conditions) for the various Watta teas. If various wines have been alluded to by their character and even gender, we can apply the same to teas.

Ran Watta, reminiscent of wines made from cool climate grapes, picked just before they get too ripe, is an exquisite and alluring tea. Uda Watta is comparable to a light style red wine made from grapes grown in cool climates. It is delicate, radiant and elegant. Meda Watta, analogous to a wine from warm but not hot climate area and grapes grown on steeper hillslopes facing the sun, is a handsome and impeccable tea. Yata Watta, reminiscent of a robust wine, whose grapes are grown on flat lands and lower altitudes, with lots of sun is an authentic, suave and stately tea.

Here, three other taste experts, from the field of wine share their sensory experiences of the four teas.

BOB CAMPBELL

MASTER OF WINE, WINE WRITER AND WINE JUDGE, NEW ZEALAND

TASTING NOTES

Ran Watta - Light/medium in colour; aromas of vanilla, citrus/orange, blackcurrant bud, biscuit and peach. In taste, it is supple, light-bodied and with fine chalky tannins.

Uda Watta - Medium in colour; aromas of vanilla, hay, mint, peach, biscuit, peat and wood smoke. A soft, subtle tea with a smooth, almost velvety structure and a lingering finish.

Meda Watta - Deep coloured; aromas of orange rind, cloves, vanilla, seaweed, earthy, biscuit and peat smoke. Elegance on a grand scale. A rich, robust tea with firm, fine tannins.

Yata Watta - Very deep coloured. Aromas of lemon blossom, toasted, malted barley, biscuit and peat. Rich, full-bodied tea with a backbone of fine-grained, drying tannins.

OVERALL COMMENT

In summary, each of the Watte teas lives up to its wine-style partner in colour and structure, if not in taste profile. Ran Watte is the lightest tea with the most delicate backbone of fine tannins. In both respects, it is indeed the 'champagne' of teas when compared to the other Watte teas.

The thin-skinned Pinot Noir grape variety tends to be lighter in colour and tannin than the thicker-skinned varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz. In that respect, the lighter, smoother Uda Watte tea justifies the comparison with Pinot Noir while the deeper and more robust Meda Watte and Yata Watte teas earn their link with Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz.

HUBRECHT DUIJKER

EUROPEAN WINE TASTER, WINE JUDGE & WRITER, NETHERLANDS

TASTING NOTES

Ran Watte - Golden orange colour. Elegant structure. Smooth, with a pinch of spiciness – and a fine aroma with some peach and other citrus fruit. The hint of spiciness has the same function as the crispness (from the chalk soil) that distinguishes Champagne from other sparkling wines.

Uda Watte - More colour than the previous tea, but not very dark. In style, it is charming, with an almost lush, supple nature. It also has some tannin-like backbone, with the presence of slight spiciness.

Meda Watte - This tea offers a fairly dark brown colour and a firm, full, yet lively taste with hints of caramel, fresh figs and some floral elements, plus a good finish. Structured and firm. Like the other three teas, this one has a beautiful balance too.

Yata Watte - This dark brown tea tastes round, full, almost muscular, and has elements of – ever so slightly sweet – spices and bayleaf. Very restoring indeed. And, with a long, harmonious finale.

OVERALL COMMENT

Ran Watte could be considered in wine terms to be in the style of Champagne, Uda Watte is reminiscent of a Pinot Noir in style, Meda Watte is like an Australian Shiraz whilst Yata Watte is like a good Cabernet.

IAN MCKENZIE

AUSTRALIAN WINEMAKER, TASTER AND WINE-JUDGE, AUSTRALIA

TASTING NOTES

Ran Watte - Bright light tan leading to burnt orange with attractive green/gold at the meniscus. Similar to a well-aged amontillado sherry. Lifted, lively, lightly herbal aromas with undertones of delicate lemony/citrus fruit with added complexity of light aromatic spice. Hints of orange rind also come through. Light, lively, fresh, herbal front palate developing with fine grained tannins to a soft elegant but flavoursome mid-palate and finishing with a dry, lightly astringent sensation. Palate is left clean and refreshed. Lovely balance of herbal flavours and tannin with great palate length.

Uda Watte - Attractive bright tan with orange tones. Deep golden green at the meniscus, similar to a well-aged oloroso sherry. Very typical dried 'tea' character with undertones of new hay. Fresh and lightly aromatic, even fruity with slightly gamey forest floor aromas. Entry is immediately flavoursome and supple, leading into a soft, round, medium-bodied mid-palate. Back palate develops richness and depth with mouth coating but fine and complex tannins resulting in great length. Overall, a lovely balance of attractive, almost fruity flavours and soft generous tannins. A medium-bodied aperitif style.

Meda Watte - Attractive deep golden brown with hints of green at the meniscus. Sweet, lightly pungent and aromatic tobacco-like characters with complex roasted nut undertones, reminiscent of lightly charry barrel ferment characters found in many fine red wines. Immediate sensation of strong rich and full-bodied flavour with an extra dimension of complexity and extract, leading to a very satisfying mouth feel. The abundant tannins are quite assertive and pleasantly drying but neither aggressive nor bitter.

Yata Watte - Deep chocolate brown with rich golden highlights intermingled with some greens at the meniscus. Similar in colour to a nicely aged Australian Rutherglen Tokay. Pronounced, aromatic, rich and sweet with malt extract and hints of dried rosemary-like herbal characters. Toasty, nutty complexity adds to an already powerful bouquet. Entry is rich and full-flavoured, building to a round mouth-filling soft richness and leading to surprisingly and pleasantly soft and velvety tannins on the back palate. Quite heavy initially but agreeably soft and smooth on the after palate.

OVERALL COMMENT

Ran Watte is a lighter bodied beverage, in many ways, similar in texture to a fine manzanilla or amontillado sherry. The strong attributes of this tea are its elegance, finesse and length of flavour. Clearly at 6,000 feet of altitude, the climate in which this tea is grown is quite cool, and this is reflected in the fine elegant structure of the brewed beverage.

These same characteristics are usually found in the wines made from grapes grown in cool climates. Although slightly off the subject, it is also interesting to note that the tannins derived from American White Oak trees used in making wine barrels are also much finer and less astringent when those trees are grown in extremely cold climates such as Wisconsin in the USA. Also, the tannins in French Oak from forests such as Tronçais and Vosges, both cold climate, are fine grained and have a degree of elegance.

Uda Watte is a medium-bodied beverage with an extra dimension of richness and softness which develops from the excellent tannin balance. The tannin structure in this tea reminds me of that derived from wine barrels made from French Oak from the Limousin forest, still relatively cool but warmer than say, Vosges.

Meda Watte is a full-bodied tea with an almost continuous sensation of flavour, from palate entry right through to back palate. Clearly a good deal 'stronger' than Ran Watte or Uda Watte and a style I would imagine would be popular for breakfast, being quite robust and very satisfying in flavour.

Yata Watte tea is somewhat of an enigma. The colour, aroma and initial palate sensations which are all big, rich and flavoursome lead one to expect a strong and heavy mouth puckering tannin finish. The surprise is that instead of intensity of flavour building as expected at the finish, it actually diminishes. This structure reminds me of Pinot Meunier sparkling base wine in that there is an immediate rich, ripe, full mid-palate flavour, which then falls away.

In winemaking parlance, a 'short' palate. Winemakers often use the term 'cold tea' to describe some of the desirable characters found in Australian Rutherglen Tokay and it is in Yata Watte that I find this character most pronounced and for this reason I find it very attractive.

DILMAH TEA PROFILES

Tea can be experienced in various ways. The appearance, form and colour of dry leaf, the liquor and also the wet leaf are first noted. Then the clarity, colour of the liquor is appreciated. Finally, the tea is tasted so that its aromas and flavours are enjoyed. All tea liquors have a unique profile. Sensory evaluation or profiling of tea, to distinguish amongst various teas, is a complex perception.

WHY PROFILE A TEA?

It is a systematic approach to better understanding and appreciating tea. It relates the sensory character of tea to its terroir and the production process. The sensory profile of any tea is the combination of its scent or aromas, its flavours and intensity, the strength and structure of its tannins, the bitterness of tannins and the persistency of flavour in the mouth after swallowing the tea (see the chapter entitled “Dimensions of Taste”). Tea tasters like to ascribe a character or personality to tea – it helps when recalling and recognising the tea when it is encountered in the future.

WHERE AND HOW DOES TEA GET ITS AROMA AND TASTE?

Scientists such as Roberts, Sanderson, Mahanta, Yamanashi, Hazarika, McDowell and Owuor have, over the years, researched tea. Indeed some of them continue evaluating tea, and their work has helped us understand the origins of taste and flavours of this product.



ANNEX A

TASTING THEMES & CHECKLISTS

There is an unlimited number of tasting themes for tea. You can compare blends with single estates, compare the various white teas, green teas and so on.

However, don't forget to:

- ✎ Provide sufficient cups so at least two samples of tea can be compared side by side.
- ✎ Hand out tasting sheets and pencils so participants can write down their impressions for discussion.
- ✎ Cater to hungry guests. Provide a selection of chocolate, biscuits, cheese, fruit, crackers, bread, sandwiches and other snack foods.
- ✎ Set out a table with chairs so that participants can be comfortable. This can be a formal setting, like in a class room or a round table as suggested in the Wu Wo tea ceremony, which originated from Taiwan.

"Another novelty is the tea-party, an extraordinary meal in that, being offered to persons that have already dined well, it supposes neither appetite nor thirst, and has no object but distraction, no basis but delicate enjoyment."

Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin.
(1755-1825)
The physiology of taste.

WU WO

In the Wu Wo tea ceremony, there are practically no boundaries – simply because the idea is to encourage participants to discard all their preconceptions, even knowledge acquired, about tea in order to establish group equality, so that everyone present can taste tea without prejudice. The reason? To make tea as enjoyable to as many, especially new drinkers. Thus, for every cup of tea brewed, any brewing method can be used; there are no finite answers to what is a correct cup of tea. Rather, it is an occasion to participate, experience, share tea, tea arts, and tea culture, live with and by tea as a companion, a part of one's life and living with tea.

1. Seating arrangement is chosen randomly.
– No priority to seats, regardless of social status.
2. Tea is served in one direction.
3. Everyone must accept and appreciate all the teas.

Tea leaf contains a large number of enzymes, biochemical intermediates and structural elements normally associated with plant growth and photosynthesis together with substances that are responsible for the characteristics of tea itself. These include flavanols, flavanol glycosides, polyphenolic acids, caffeine, amino acids, mono- and polysaccharides, proteins, cellulose, lipids, chlorophylls and volatiles. Tea also contains theaflavins, thearubigins and other substances that are the result of its manufacture.

More than 700 compounds contribute to flavours in tea. Between 5 and 50 parts per million of various compounds that exist as odorous molecules (acids, flavanols, volatiles etc.) is found in a cup of tea. Pleasant aromas come from esters and mono-terpene alcohols such as geraniol and linalool. Green or grassy smells and tastes come from 'alcohols' such as hexanals. Other 'alcohols' contribute to a seaweed-like aroma. Floral scents come from geraniol. The distinct jasmine floral odour detected in many Oolong teas comes from an isomer of methyl jasmonate. The sweet, tastes come from linalool, whilst fruity is the result of methyl salicylate.

Bushes that are high grown on hills for example sometimes take many years to mature because of seasonal conditions and cool climate. Leaves are also thicker than those grown at lower altitudes. These could be reasons why the Darjeeling leaf contains more linalool, geraniol and menthyl salicylate, compared to the leaf of Assam – and explains why Darjeeling teas have a muscatel flavour compared to other teas such as Assam – The Darjeeling tea simply has more sweet, floral and fruity aroma molecules.

Yet, certain varieties grown at altitudes above 1200 metres in Sri Lanka and in the Uva district of Sri Lanka in August and September (when the environmental conditions are met - cool evenings, dry, windy weather for at least two weeks) share some traits with Darjeeling tea.

There is the subject of astringency in tea. Why is it different for various teas? When tasting tea, we know that green tea often tastes tannic. This is because green tea contains many more phenolic compounds or catechins than black tea.

During the fermentation of tea, enzymes oxidize the catechins found in the green leaf (fermentation of tea), and theaflavins (golden yellow pigment) and thearubigins (orange brown compounds) are produced. Some of these natural chemicals contribute to the brightness of tea, others give the tea a brisk or freshness of taste, others affect the depth and richness of colour of the tea liquor. Some catechins survive the fermentation – and with some theaflavin molecules, polyphenols and thearubigins, are responsible for the astringent taste in tea. Bitter taste comes from the caffeine in the tea.

"Tea and wine have a lot in common. Both have complex flavours as well as tannins for structure. Tea can even express a sense of place, or terroir, as I discovered when I tasted the Dilmah Watte teas from plants grown at different altitudes. The difference is staggering."
Bob Campbell,
Master of Wine,
New Zealand



PROFILES OF VARIOUS TEA LIQUORS - T SERIES

White and Unprocessed Teas

Ceylon Silver Tips
 Colour: Pale yellow
 Aroma: Very light aroma of barley and hay and flowers
 Taste: Subtle with very light intensity, silky texture, trace of bitterness, hint of florals and short in the finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Organic Ceylon Flowery Pekoe
 Colour: Ochre
 Aroma: Woody, with herbaceous and nutty overtones
 Taste: Moderate intensity, lightly chewy with bitter tannins and long aftertaste.
 Flavour Intensity:

Darjeeling White Treasure
 Colour: Ivory
 Aroma: Faint floral and fruit aromas allied with nuances of wood and biscuits.
 Taste: Delicate flavour, light texture and mild, short finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Green Teas

Ceylon Whole Leaf Green
 Colour: Ochre
 Aroma: Strong florals, some fruit, smoke, herbs and citrus.
 Taste: Moderate in flavour, intensity, texture, bitterness and length. Delicate.
 Flavour Intensity:

Ceylon Young Hyson Green
 Colour: Yellow orange
 Aroma: Florals overshadowed by barnyard, herbs and woody aromas.
 Taste: Intense flavour, chewy tannin and some bitterness and longish aftertaste.
 Flavour Intensity:

Jasmine Pear Dragon White Tea
 Colour: Light straw yellow
 Aroma: Lifted florals, incense, fruit, honey water, dried grass and Jasmine.
 Taste: Light intensity, firm texture, a trace of bitterness, refreshing and medium length.
 Flavour Intensity:

White Litchee No. 1
 Colour: Pale vanilla cream
 Aroma: Light subtle aromas of hay and honey and overtones of longan fruit.
 Taste: Soft, smooth tannins and a hint of bitterness.
 Flavour Intensity:

Sencha Green Extra Special
 Colour: Medium gold
 Aroma: Herbal notes, hay and some florals.
 Taste: Medium body, light intensity and pleasant astringency balanced by some sweetness.
 Flavour Intensity:

Jade Butterfly Handmade White
 Colour: Light gold
 Aroma: Complex yet restrained, spanning the florals, fruit, herbs marine and toasty caramel.
 Taste: Light flavours and textures, hint of bitterness, accented and short finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Mingmei Famous Plum Green
 Colour: Orange with yellow green highlights
 Aroma: Fruity with sweetcorn, hay and honey nuances
 Taste: Low intensity of flavour and smooth texture, no bitterness but very long finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Jasmine Extra Special No.1 Green
 Colour: Deep gold with amber
 Aroma: Floral with hint of cherrywood, some herbs and fruit.
 Taste: Moderate intensity and texture, very slight bitterness and long finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Maofeng Fragrant Green
 Colour: Corn yellow with apricot
 Aroma: Strong herbaceousness with hay, earth and ash.
 Taste: Moderate intensity and texture, some bitterness and very long finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Organic Chun Mei Eyebrow Green
 Colour: Straw yellow
 Aroma: Herbaceous with cornsilk, hemp and some smoke.
 Taste: Firm tannins, moderate bitterness and medium length. Delicate.
 Flavour Intensity:

Organic Ceylon Green Pekoe
 Colour: Orange yellow
 Aroma: Herbaceous, woody, nutty
 Taste: Medium intensity, strong tannins, pleasant bitter taste, long finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Semi-Processed/Oolong Teas

The First Ceylon Oolong
 Colour: Ochre
 Aroma: Touch of herbs, spice wood and nuts.
 Taste: Low flavour intensity, low tannins, slight bitterness and moderate length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Single Estate Oolong Leaf
 Colour: Ochre and gold
 Aroma: Herbaceous with hint of linseed oil and touch of smoke and peat.
 Taste: Light flavour intensity low tannins and trace of bitterness and a medium length finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Black/Orthodox Teas

Lapsang Souchong
 Colour: Terracotta brown
 Aroma: Upfront tobacco, tar and smoke, cigar, wood and earth.
 Taste: Intense flavours, light bitterness, light texture and moderate length finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

First Ceylon Souchong
 Colour: Orange red
 Aroma: Smoky, spicy with cinnamon.
 Taste: Medium-full body with a round sweet finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Supreme Ceylon Single Origin
 Colour: Brick red
 Aroma: Straw, mixed spice, earth and wood.
 Taste: Light intensity with medium tannins, moderate bitterness and moderate length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Nuwara Eliya Pekoe
 Colour: Salmon brown
 Aroma: Fruity, woody and grassy with some barley.
 Taste: Light flavour intensity, moderate tannins and slight bitterness with a medium length and harmonious finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Galle District OPI
 Colour: Orange red
 Aroma: Hint of florals, with citrus notes and some walnuts.
 Taste: Moderate flavour intensity, moderate texture and slight bitterness with a long finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Dombagastalawa Single Estate FBOP
 Colour: Orange with brown hue
 Aroma: Light floral scent, hint of hay, pistachios and strong earthy character.
 Taste: Intense flavour, chewy tannin and moderate bitterness but a long long aftertaste.
 Flavour Intensity:

Ceylon Low Elevation Tippy FF
 Colour: Orange red
 Aroma: Corn and dried herbs, grass, tobacco, hint of citrus and woodsmoke.
 Taste: Intense flavours, strong tannins and strong bitterness, moderate length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Finest Ceylon Tippy FBOPF
 Colour: Ochre with red brown
 Aroma: Strong floral aroma with hint of earth, marine and caramel.
 Taste: Moderate intensity of flavours, soft tannins, bitter with moderate length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Prince of Kandy
 Colour: Orange gold
 Aroma: Herbaceous with some florals and hint of leaves, cashews and cedar.
 Taste: Chewy tannins, strong bitter flavours and long finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Single Estate Assam
 Colour: Orange brown
 Aroma: Light florals, spice, herbs, citrus, meat, earth, marine, wood and smoke – complex.
 Taste: Well balanced with light flavours, textures and slight bitterness and moderate length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Keemun Special Leaf
 Colour: Orange red
 Aroma: Stonefruit, tobacco, nuts and mocha with some herbs.
 Taste: Moderate intensity, little bitterness and very long finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Pu Erh No. 1 Leaf
 Colour: Burnt umber
 Aroma: Damp earth, herbs and strong wood and smoke overtones.
 Taste: Intense flavour, well rounded mouthfeel with little bitterness.
 Flavour Intensity:

Darjeeling Single Estate
 Colour: Salmon brown
 Aroma: Floral and tobacco-straw aromas with some earth, nuts and grape.
 Taste: Strong flavours with chewy tannins, moderate bitterness and medium long finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Red, Flavoured and Herbal Teas

UVA 2007
 Colour: Deep gold orange
 Aroma: Multilayered aromas with upfront florals, stone fruit, citrus fruit and caramel
 Taste: Medium intensity, moderate tannins, moderate bitterness and finishing very long, with a rich taste and elegance.
 Flavour Intensity:

Natural Minty Ceylon Pekoe
 Colour: Terracotta brown with red
 Aroma: Strong mint fragrance with a hint of wood and smoke.
 Taste: Light flavour intensity, light texture and short finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Green Tea with Jasmine
 Colour: Orche with gold
 Aroma: Floral with sweet Jasmine notes.
 Taste: Medium body with some green flavours, delicate taste, texture and medium length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Natural Ceylon Ginger
 Colour: Ochre with brown
 Aroma: Strong mixed spice scent with a predominance of ginger.
 Taste: Intense flavours, not astringent, trace of bitterness and moderate length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Original Earl Grey
 Colour: Brick red with copper
 Aroma: Complex aromas of bergamot, spice box, florals, wood and smoke.
 Taste: Intense with strong tannins and medium length finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Moroccan Mint
 Colour: Orche with red
 Aroma: Spicy with strong herbal and mint character
 Taste: Intense flavour mirrors aromas with a chewy but not bitter and long aftertaste.
 Flavour Intensity:

Natural Rosehip with Hibiscus
 Colour: Deep pink
 Aroma: Upfront florals, strong pomegranate and other stone fruits, citrus and licorice
 Taste: Intense flavours with a light texture and trace of bitterness leaving a sweetness and of medium length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Pure Chamomile Flowers
 Colour: Straw yellow
 Aroma: Intensely floral with pineapple and apples, hint of herbs.
 Taste: Light flavours, light bitterness and moderate length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Organic Rooibos with Bourbon Vanilla
 Colour: Red with deep pink and orange
 Aroma: Floral, spicy, fragrant herbaceousness with earthy overtones, wood, caramel and vanilla
 Taste: Light intensity, strong tannins, no bitterness and medium length.
 Flavour Intensity:

Italian Almond
 Colour: Orange red
 Aroma: Floral and fruity, agar-jelly aromas give way to barley.
 Taste: Light tannins, and light bitterness, moderate intensity of flavours and short finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Rose with French Vanilla
 Colour: Deep pink with brown
 Aroma: Strong florals, hint of fruit, herbs and wood and appealing vanilla.
 Taste: Moderate intensity and tannins, short finish but appealing flavours.
 Flavour Intensity:

Vanilla Ceylon Tea
 Colour: Dark salmon brown
 Aroma: Fruity with hint of plums, hay, lightly wooded and caramelized vanilla butter.
 Taste: Moderate intensity, good tannins, some bitterness and long aftertaste.
 Flavour Intensity:

Ceylon Cinnamon Spice
 Colour: Terracotta brown with red
 Aroma: Spicy with cinnamon, hazelnuts and touch of fruit, hint of smoke.
 Taste: Moderate intensity, light texture and trace of bitterness, finishing short.
 Flavour Intensity:

Mediterranean Mandarin
 Colour: Light orange red
 Aroma: Strong florals with orange blossoms, bitter oranges and honey lemon.
 Taste: Medium flavour intensity and medium tannins, slight bitterness and moderate length. Exotic.
 Flavour Intensity:

Pure Peppermint Leaves
 Colour: Ochre with red
 Aroma: Strong mentholated aroma with distinct spearmint, applemint and peppermint.
 Taste: Intense flavours but light tannins, hardly any bitterness and short aftertaste.
 Flavour Intensity:

First Ceylon Camellia Flower
 Colour: Mahogany
 Aroma: Herbaceous with a hint of wood and smoke
 Taste: Medium body and intensity, moderate tannin and medium length finish.
 Flavour Intensity:

Jasmine Extra Special No. 1
 Colour: Ochre
 Aroma: Perfumed floral blooms, a little fruit and herb and cherrywood
 Taste: Moderate flavour intensity and texture, slight bitterness and long aftertaste.
 Flavour Intensity:

TEA & FOOD SENSORY EVALUATION

Here is a methodology for tasting tea with cheese, chocolate, sushi, and various foods.

Tea need not be tasted on its own. Try tasting tea with a variety of foods.

Green tea, with its mildly earthy, fresh, light grassy taste, is Japan's favourite beverage to accompany sushi. But have you noticed that the tea at the sushi bar works better with some types of sushi?

For many chocolate lovers, the flavours (slightly bitter, not very sweet, slightly acidic), the aromas (intense cocoa coupled with the distinct flavours of certain fillings), its tannins overpower most wines and many beverages. Certain teas with astringency and acidity can enhance the flavour of the chocolate; other teas tend to accentuate the astringency or acidity of the chocolate. It is thus necessary to taste tea with the food groups you intend to serve it with.

Try tasting two teas with a variety of chocolates and cheeses, or any foods that take your fancy. Have fun but remember – taste is subjective, and every tongue is different. The lovely tannins and bittersweet dark chocolate flavours might make the person next to you pucker and cringe. Alternatively, you might be averse to strong blue cheese but your neighbour might love it.

Challenge the pairing, take notes and think about what else you could pair. Here is a guide to how you can delve deeper into the intricate nuances of some foods when tasting them with tea. The tasting sheet allows you to rate the suitability of the match.

*“Tea is like a child.
You have to play with
it, encourage, persuade,
coax and motivate it,
and most importantly
enjoy it in its many
forms and moods.”*
Carrie Chen, Tea Artist.

TEA TASTING SHEET – WHAT TO LOOK FOR

The Visual Aspect

- Cheese** Consider the form, colour and texture. Cheeses usually fall into various groups – blue, goat, ewe, hard, soft with mould on the rind, soft with washed/coloured rind.
- Chocolate** Note the matt or shiny exterior; the surface should be free of blemishes such as white marks (called bloom). Observe the colour and manufacturer's job at molding and tempering – was it crafted carefully?
- Sushi** Note the type of seafood. Appreciate the way it was cut and presented. Is it bite size?
- Tea** Note the colour and condition of the dry leaf, the infused leaf and the liquor – using the techniques outlined in this book.

The Smell







- Cheese** Rub a small piece between your fingers and then smell. Is it mild or strong. Note the aromas – grassy, nutty, milky, etc.
- Chocolate** Break off a piece, note the sound of how it snapped off – good chocolate resonates with a clean loud snap. The piece of chocolate should be large enough to accommodate the full evolution of the flavour profile. A piece too small may not allow you to detect every subtle nuance when the chocolate melts in the mouth. Smell the chocolate and note the aromas.
- Sushi** Is the rice vinegar strong or subtle? Is the seafood fresh with the smell of ocean breeze rather than fishy?
- Tea** Put your nose into the cup and take a whiff. Just like for any food, inhaling will prime the tongue for the incoming nuances of flavour. Use the techniques outlined in this book for detecting the aromas and the taste of tea.

IN THE MOUTH

When tasting food with tea, give equal time to both the food type and the tea to fully take in their flavours and textures. Taste the tea first then put a small piece of the food into your mouth. Let the flavours develop (in the case of chocolate, let it melt) and as you swallow, note the aftertaste. Now take another piece of the food, sip some tea and let them mingle. For sushi, does the tea go with the powdery sweetness of the prawn, the buttery flavours of marlin or the marbled silkiness of tuna belly, the crunchiness of the cucumber maki, the sweet caramelised soy glaze mingled with the rice, etc.?

CONCLUSION

Reflect on the Flavours:

-  Was it a pleasant experience?
-  Did one overpower the other or was it a harmonious blend?
-  Even though the food may have overpowered the tea, the match may have still worked – was it because the tea had a cleansing action, allowing you to take yet another bite of the food and enjoy its flavours?
-  Was the cheese too salty, the chocolate too bitter?
-  Was the texture, heavy or light; smooth or grainy?
-  Did any changes in texture and flavour occur?

Tea with Cheese	Excellent	Good	Mediocre	Match / No Match Why:
Tea with Cheese	Excellent	Good	Mediocre	Match / No Match Why:
Tea with Chocolate	Excellent	Good	Mediocre	Match / No Match Why:
Tea with Chocolate	Excellent	Good	Mediocre	Match / No Match Why:
Tea with Sushi	Excellent	Good	Mediocre	Match / No Match Why:
Tea with Sushi	Excellent	Good	Mediocre	Match / No Match Why:

please circle one

ANNEX B

TEA SENSORY EVALUATION SHEET

Taster Initials / Group

Dry Leaf colour / condition

Name of Tea / Serial no

Infused leaf colour and aromas

COLOUR - SHADE

Pale

Deep

Light

Dark

please circle one

COLOUR - REFLECTIONS

Green

Gold

Chestnut

Violet

Brown

please circle one

AROMAS

FLORAL

jasmine, rose, hyacinth, lily,
lilac, iris, dried flowers, orange blossom,
camomile, lemon blossom, geranium

0

1

2

3

4

5

SPICY/BALSAMIC

aniseed, pepper, cloves, cardamom, saffron,
curry, nutmeg, bergamot

0

1

2

3

4

5

FRUITY/NON CITRUS

apples, apricots, figs, banana, strawberries,
blackberries, pear, peach, grape, mango,
lychee, currants

0

1

2

3

4

5

HERBACEOUS

tobacco, grass, hay, green stems,
cut grass, beans, leaf, hemp, straw

0

1

2

3

4

5

please circle one. 0 = non-existent, 5 = concentrated

AROMAS

CITRUS

lemon, lime, pineapple, grapefruit, orange rind, zest of lemon

0

1

2

3

4

5

MEAT, EARTH & MARINE

leather, earth, wildcat, animal, cowshed, menagerie, wet leaves, humus, moss, earth, seaweed, iodine, oyster, dried fish

0

1

2

3

4

5

WOOD & SMOKE

woodsmoke, toast, ash, tar, grilled food, sawdust, pencil, sandalwood, oak, new wood cedar

0

1

2

3

4

5

CARAMEL & OTHER FOOD

barley, milk, butter, cream, vanilla, biscuits, nuts

0

1

2

3

4

5

please circle one. 0 = non-existent, 5 = concentrated

TASTE

FLAVOUR INTENSITY

low grown teas usually have intense flavours

Light

1

2

Moderate

3

4

Intense

5

TEXTURE

Dry and Firm

1

2

Chewy

3

4

Mouth Coating

5

BITTERNESS

Trace

1

Slight

2

Moderate

3

4

V Strong

5

AFTER-TASTE/LENGTH

Short

(1 sec)

Moderate

Long

OVERALL QUALITY

COMMENT

ANNEX C

A TEA PROFESSIONAL'S TASTING VOCABULARY

Terms describing dry tea leaf

Attractive	Well-made, uniform in colour and size.
Black	Colour of dry-leaf, desirable characteristic for Orthodox teas.
Bloom	A live, rather than dull-looking tea. Bloom is often lost by over-handling/ curing, during sorting.
Bold	Pieces of leaf that are too big for a grade.
Brown	Undesirable leaf colour both for Orthodox and CTC (cut, tear and curl).
Chesty	Taint caused by unseasoned tea chest panels.
Chunky	Usually applied to large-sized tip. Desirable.
Clean	Free of stalk/fibre.
Cut	Orthodox leaf cut in the breaker rather than in the roller.
Even	Grade consisting of roughly equal-sized pieces.
Flaky	A flat, open leaf as opposed to a well-twisted leaf - usually the result of poor withering/rolling
Golden Tip	Highly desirable feature in Orthodox teas. Obtained by good withering and rolling.
Grainy	Well-made hard leaf.
Grey	Most undesirable colour of dry-leaf caused by faulty handling, over sorting.
Gritty	CTC leaf that feels hard to the touch.
Large	Describing size of a grade, implying it is too large for market requirements.
Make	A tea having "make" has been carefully manufactured.
Milled	Tea leaf that is put through a cutter and ground.
Mixed	Denotes presence of other grades in a particular grade. Undesirable.
Neat	Well-made teas of even appearance.
Ragged	Rough and uneven leaf.
Reddish	Usually end-of-season leaf colour. Clonal CTC teas, however, can also be reddish.
Shotty	Well-made and rolled.
Small	A grade of lesser size than is normal for it.
Stalky	Indicating undue presence of stalk. Usually due to coarse plucking.
Stylish	Neat and of superior leaf appearance.
Twist	Well-rolled, particular reference to whole leaf.
Uneven	A grade composed of uneven pieces of leaf.
Well-made	Uniform in colour, size and texture.
Whiskery	Hairy fibre, usually heavily discounted by buyers.

Terms describing infused tea leaf

Bright	Alive, as opposed to dull-looking leaves.
Coppery	Colour of infused leaf, usually denoting a good quality tea. Particular reference to CTC (cut, tear and curl).
Dull	Opposed to bright and reflective leaves
Even	The term is usually combined with “bright” or “coppery.” No irregularity in colour of infused leaf.
Green	Generally undesirable. Typical of a first flush.
Mixed/Uneven	Infused leaf which has more than one colour.
Mouldy	Teas gone off through age, or damaged by water while in storage or shipment.
Musty	Suspicion of mould.
Old	Having lost most original attributes through age.
Pungent	Extremely brisk. Very desirable.
Quality	Essential characteristic of a good tea.
Strength/ Strong	Substance in tea liquor; body.
Sweaty	Undesirable taste due to storage in heaps on floor for long durations.
Thin	Lacking in body; often due to over-withering or inadequate oxidation.
Wild	Liquor character found in end-of-season teas. Undesirable.

Terms describing tea liquor

Autumnal	A seasonal term applied to teas grown during the period, possessing varying degrees of flavour.
Bakey	Unpleasant taste usually caused by very high temperatures and driving out too much moisture during the firing process.
Body	A tea liquor possessing fullness and strength.
Bright	As opposed to dull.
Brisk	A lively taste in the tea liquor, as opposed to flat or soft.
Burn	Generally applicable to Darjeeling teas, denoting a fully fired cup character.
Burnt	Tea that has been subjected to extremely high temperatures during firing. Undesirable.
Character	A most desirable quality that also permits recognition of the origin of growth of the tea.
Colour	Denoting depth of colour. Different growths/grades possess varying depths of colour.
Cream	Precipitate obtained on cooling of tea. A bright cream indicates a good quality of tea.
Dry	Slightly bakey or high-fired.
Dull	A tea liquor that is neither clear nor bright/brisk. Caused by several factors, such as bacterial contamination, faulty firing or excessive moisture content.
Flat	Lacking in briskness. Caused by age or faulty storage.
Full	A tea liquor possessing strength and body.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edwin Soon is a sensory evaluation consultant based in Singapore. An oenologist by training, and also an economist, he has worked in wineries in Australia and the US; and then for a number of years in business consulting in Europe before returning to Asia to teach wine to wine-trade and service professionals in South East Asia. Edwin is also a wine judge and continues to taste and research cheese, chocolate and olive oil. Books he has authored include *Wine with Asian Food*, *Pairing Wines with Asian Food* and *The Wines of France*.



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The cultivation of the humble tea leaf dates back 5000 years. Aside from water, tea is the most consumed beverage in the world today. Yet the understanding of this fascinating herb is superficial and commercial, at the very least. The Dilmah Way of Tea celebrates a divine leaf; this book offers an adventure in tea that begins with the story of a pioneer in tea, and travels through the myriad of pleasures in real tea. In addition to tea basics from history to cultivation and tea and food matching, forty-four of the world's most famous teas have been studied and sensory evaluated by sight, smell, taste and aftertaste. Tea lovers the world over will discover and learn how to appraise tea like an expert. In doing so, the complexities and multiple facets of tea will reveal itself. Tea will never taste quite the same again.

