

Tea Talk

Tea is a beverage made by steeping processed leaves, buds, or twigs of the tea bush *Camellia sinensis*, in hot water for a few minutes. It is a natural source of caffeine, theophylline, theanine, and antioxidants, and has almost no fat, carbohydrates, or protein.

1. Withering

Newly picked leaves are thinly spread to dry. Heated air is forced over the leaves if the climate is not suitable

2. Rolling

The leaves are twisted, rolled and sometimes shaken to break their cells. The oils that are released remain on the leaf, and give the tea its distinctive aroma

3. Oxidation

This chemical process of oxygen absorption begins when the leaf membranes are broken in the rolling process. It decides the type of tea

4. Drying and Firing

Leaves are dried in an oven, and then over wood fires. It stops the oxidation process



Black Tea

It goes through all the stages. Leaves are dried at temperatures reaching up to 200 degrees Fahrenheit. The final product is brownish (sometimes black) in colour and is sorted according to size.

Oolong Tea

The oxidation period is half that of black tea. The veins of the leaves become clear, the edges turn reddish brown, and the center remains green. The leaves are heated at a higher temperature than Black tea leaves.

Green Tea

It has a shorter process as compared to the other two. After withering, the leaves are pan fried or fired to prevent oxidation. Then the leaves are rolled and dried for its final shape. The leaves usually remain green.

The Way of Tea

Remember the tea party in Alice in Wonderland? Tea parties form a culture themselves: The Tea culture.

Tea culture is the art of preparing, serving and consuming tea. Many countries have intricate formal tea ceremonies! Some examples are Korean tea ceremony, Chinese tea culture, the unique customs in Tibet where tea is commonly brewed with salt and butter, and so on.

The most famous is the complex and formal Japanese tea ceremony. A tea practitioner must know the types and production process of tea. She must wear traditional Japanese wear *Kimono*, master the arts of calligraphy, flower arrangement. Choose the ceramics, incense and so on. Even the guest should be well-versed with the decorum of a tea ceremony such as gestures, phrases, and general deportment in the tea room!