

Tea

The tea plant grows mainly in the Far East, with India leading the world in production. The plants are grown from seeds produced by their white flowers. They are grown on large farms called tea gardens.

When the tea plant is from three to five years old, and about three to four feet high, it is ripe enough for its leaves to be picked. Workers, called "tea pluckers", pick the leaves and send them to a factory for processing.

At the factory, the leaves are spread out on shelves called "withering racks", where air is blown over them to dry. Next, the leaves are put through rolling machines to press out their juices, and then put into a fermenting room, where controlled humidity and temperature chemically change them, and they become a copper colour. The last step is to dry the leaves in an oven, where they turn almost black.

In Great Britain, where tea is the national drink, about 250 million kilograms of tea are imported every year; enough to make about 100 billion cups of tea!

Black tea is a variety of tea that is more oxidized than the oolong, green, and white varieties. All four varieties are made from leaves of *Camellia sinensis*. Black tea is generally stronger in flavor and contains more caffeine than the others.

Some popular types of black tea:

- Earl Grey
- Keemun
- Darjeeling
- Lapsang Souchong
- Assam
- Yunnan
- Nilgiri



Why drink tea?

1. Tea tastes good

There's a great variety of different teas to try. If you include herbal teas, which aren't real teas, but still taste good, then the number of choices is vast.

2. Tea is good for you

There have been many studies recently showing many health benefits from drinking tea. Black, Oolong, green, or white, it doesn't matter. Each type does good things to you, often different things. So drink a lot of tea, and drink a wide variety. Tea also contains fluoride, so your teeth will be healthier.

3. Tea is not bad for you

There's very little in tea that's actually bad for you:

- Tea contains caffeine, much less than coffee, but some people can't tolerate even small amounts. The blacker the tea, the higher the caffeine. So, if you're avoiding caffeine, drink only white and green teas.
- Tea can stain your teeth, but not as badly as coffee. So a good idea is to rinse your teeth with water after drinking tea.

4. Tea helps you to relax.

Most tea-drinkers agree that tea helps you to relax and feel content.

How to make a cup of English tea.

What you need: *tea, water, kettle, milk (or lemon), sugar (or sweetener)*

1. Heat the water until it boils. You can use a kettle for this, because it's quick, easy and safe.
2. Put a spoon of tea (or 1 tea bag) in a cup or mug, and pour in boiling water.
3. Wait for between 10 seconds and 3 minutes. The more time you wait, the stronger will be the tea.
4. Remove the tea, and add milk (or lemon) and sugar (or sweetener) if desired.

