



Down to the last Tea

Tea drinkers, especially aficionados, have a certain class about them. What makes them even classier is when they know exactly what is in their drink. If you can tell the difference between Green Tea and Matcha, without resorting to jokes, then consider yourself posh and tasteful. In case you can't, here's a rundown on teas of all sorts along with a glossary breaking down tea lingo. Consider this a life-hack for being a hit at spiffy parties!

GREEN TEA

Green tea is heated immediately after being picked. Whether pan-fired, steamed or fired in an oven, the goodness of the leaf is sealed inside. The resulting tea is very delicate. To prevent cooking the leaves and destroying their subtle notes, green tea should be brewed in water that is well below boiling.

MATCHA

In Japan, Matcha translates to powdered tea. This is a beverage where the tea leaves are consumed, not strained like most other teas. Famous for being the tea celebrated in the Japanese Tea Ceremony, it can be enjoyed with or without ritual. The vibrant green colour in Matcha comes from careful cultivation with the plants covered with mats several weeks prior to harvest, making it difficult for them to receive sunlight. In this struggle, the plant produces more chlorophyll and its leaves become supple. Once harvested, the leaves are dried, de-veined (stems removed) and stone-ground into powder.



Masala chai, or "Spiced Tea," has its origins in India. It's made on a stove top, cooking black tea with local spices, milk and sugar. There are many theories as to how this tradition began. Some allude to folk tales from yesteryears of Indian royal courts, while others describe a more realistic picture of making British tea more palatable. Chai has been an integral part of everyday life in India since the 1930's. You can find it at any hour and nearly any setting. The spices used to make chai vary from region to region and from household to household. They are typically a variation of black tea with cardamom, ginger, clove, black pepper, bay leaf, star anise and fennel. Making traditional chai is an all-day process in which whole spices and black tea are simmered with milk.

OOIONG TEA

Oolong tea is generally rolled after picking, allowing its essential oils to slowly oxidise. This reaction to the air darkens the leaf and produces distinctive fragrances. Once the leaf has developed properly, the tea maker must stop the oxidation by heating it rapidly in a process called 'panning.'

The leaf is then rolled into its final shape. Producing this handcrafted tea properly is extremely labour intensive. The tea maker must carefully balance many elements in the critical first few hours, including weather conditions, leaf quality, and oxidation time.

CHAI TEA

