



**Creative Juices
Consulting**

Health Benefits of Tea

Tea is a name given to a lot of brews, but purists consider only green tea, black tea, white tea, oolong tea, and pu-erh tea the real thing. They are all derived from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, a shrub native to China and India, and contain unique antioxidants called flavonoids. The most potent of these, known as EGCG, may help against free radicals that can contribute to cancer, heart disease, and clogged arteries.

All these teas also have caffeine and theanine, which affect the brain and seem to heighten mental alertness.

The more processed the tea leaves, usually the less polyphenol content. Polyphenols include flavonoids. Oolong and black teas are oxidized or fermented, so they have lower concentrations of polyphenols than green tea; but their antioxidantizing power is still high.

Here's what some studies have found about the potential health benefits of tea

Black Tea

- **Black tea: Made with fermented tea leaves, black tea has the highest caffeine content and forms the basis for flavored teas like chai, along with some instant teas. Studies have shown that black tea may protect lungs from damage caused by exposure to cigarette smoke. It also may reduce the risk of stroke.**

The scoop: Black tea is the most common variety and accounts for about 75 percent of global tea consumption. Black tea is made from the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant, which are typically rolled and fermented, then dried and crushed. Black tea has a slightly bitter flavor and contains the most caffeine—about 40 milligrams per cup. (A cup of coffee has 50 to 100.)

Health benefits: Black tea has high concentrations of the antioxidant compounds known as theaflavins and thearubigins, which have been linked to lower levels of cholesterol, says Rebecca Baer, a registered dietitian in New York City. Research has shown that people who drink three or more cups of black tea daily may cut their risk of stroke by 21 percent.

(Vital Tea) Black tea is the result of fully oxidized tea leaves, yielding a darker amber color. Due to full oxidation, black tea will contain the highest trace of caffeine among other tea varieties. In China, black tea is known as "Hong Cha" or red tea. In America, red tea is more commonly known as rooibos, a South African herbal. Black tea ranges from floral to earthier and smokier flavors. Note that black tea due to its processing, can be retained for longer shelf life.

Green Tea

- **Green tea: Made with steamed tea leaves, it has a high concentration of EGCG and has been widely studied. Green tea's antioxidants may interfere with the growth of bladder, breast, lung, stomach, pancreatic, and colorectal cancers; prevent clogging of the arteries, burn fat, counteract oxidative stress on the brain, reduce risk of neurological disorders like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, reduce risk of stroke, and improve cholesterol levels.**

The scoop: Green tea has a more delicate flavor than black. The leaves are dried and heat-treated soon after they're picked, which stops the fermentation process. It contains about 25 milligrams of caffeine per cup.

Health benefits: Green tea is full of antioxidants called catechins; a subgroup known as EGCG may ward off everything from cancer to heart disease, says Karen Collins, a registered dietitian and a nutrition adviser at the American Institute for Cancer Research, in Washington, D.C. One study found that each daily cup of green tea consumed may lower the risk of cardiovascular disease by 10 percent.

(Vital tea) Green tea is the result of natural processing with minimum oxidation. Becoming more prevalent in America, where black tea is more commonly consumed. Due to its minimal processing, green tea has been reputed to contain high levels of antioxidants, polyphenols, flavonoids. Our selection of green tea ranges from bitter, floral, grassy, nutty, smokey, to sweet.

Oolong Tea

- **Oolong tea: In an animal study, those given antioxidants from oolong tea were found to have lower bad cholesterol levels.**

The scoop: Oolong is similar to black tea, but it's fermented for a shorter time, which gives it a richer taste. It contains about 30 milligrams of caffeine per cup.

Health benefits: It may aid in weight loss. "Oolong activates an enzyme responsible for dissolving triglycerides, the form of dietary fat that's stored in fat cells," says Baer. One study showed that women who drank oolong tea burned slightly more calories over a two-hour period than those who drank only water.

(vital tea Oolong tea, often spelled and pronounced as "Wulong", is produced through a process of withering and oxidation before the leaves are rolled. The level of oxidation can range anywhere between 10%-85%. Based on these levels of processing, the flavors of oolong range greatly from floral to fruity to roasted aromas. Oolong teas are a perfect balance of antioxidants and caffeine. Our selection of oolong teas include Wuyi rock tea from Fujian, Dan Cong from Guangdong, and the popular Taiwanese oolong teas)

White Tea

- **White tea: Uncured and unfermented. One study showed that white tea has the most potent anticancer properties compared to more processed teas.**

The scoop: These leaves are picked when they're very young, so white tea has a much milder flavor than any other variety, not to mention less caffeine—about 15 milligrams per cup. Loose tea may also contain more antioxidants than tea in bags, because the leaves are less processed.

Health benefits: White tea is another health multitasker. It offers the same potential cardiovascular and cancer-fighting benefits as other teas, says Joe Simrany, president of the Tea Association of the USA, in New York City. And some research suggests that it may offer benefits to people with diabetes. An animal study published in the journal *Phytomedicine* found that consuming white tea resulted in improved glucose tolerance and a reduction in LDL cholesterol. Some experts believe that this may eventually have implications for humans.

(Vital tea) White tea or "Bai Cha" is a natural and lightly oxidized tea leaf that comes from the buds and leaves of the *Camellia Sinensis* plant. The leaves and buds are withered and then lightly processed to prevent further oxidation. Known to also contain very fine silver downy hairs on the unopened buds. Due to its natural processing, white tea has been reputed to contain the highest trace of antioxidants with the lowest levels of caffeine. Perfect to be enjoyed by those who prefer tea at night, with its subtle and refreshingly mild flavors

Pu-erh Tea

- **Pu-erh tea: Made from fermented and aged leaves. Considered a black tea, its leaves are pressed into cakes.**

(Vital Tea) Pu-erh tea pronounced "Poo Air" is a post-fermented black tea produced in Yunnan province. Post-fermentation is a process where tea leaves undergo a microbial fermentation process after the leaves are dried. Our wide selection of pu-erh tea consists of both loose leaf as well as compressed tea cakes and bricks. Ranging from minimally processed raw (sheng) pu-erh to fermented and aged cooked (shou) pu-erhs. Our cooked (shou) pu-erh we carry are all aged underground, yielding a unique and different taste for all palates.

Herbal Tea

The scoop: Technically, herbal teas are not teas at all—they're usually some combination of dried fruits, flowers, and herbs. Herbal varieties contain no caffeine. Avoid herbal weight-loss teas, which may contain dangerous laxatives.

Health benefits: There has been less research on herbal blends than on traditional teas, but one study published in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that drinking three cups of hibiscus tea daily could help lower blood pressure in people with hypertension. And evidence suggests that chamomile tea may promote sleep and that peppermint tea may calm the stomach.

(Vital Tea) Flowers and herbals are often referred to as tisanes, or infusions that are not made from the leaves of the tea bush (*Camellia Sinensis*). These infusions may contain flowers, fruits, herbs, roots, and spices. All tisanes listed here are naturally caffeine free, so they can be enjoyed any time of the day. Many can be infused alone, or blended with other tea to create a flower tea or herbal tea infusion.

How Much of the Herb Is Needed for Herb Tea?

Fresh Leaves: 3 teaspoons per cup of water

Dry Leaves: 1 teaspoon per cup of water

Brewing Guide

Green Tea – 2 min

Herbal Tea-7 min

Black Tea- 2 min

White Tea – 3 min

High Quality Asian Tea – 30 sec – 1 min

Oolong – 2 min

Water Temperature Guide

The temperature at which you steep tea matters - delicate leaves steeped at too high of a temperature will burn and leave a bitter flavor in the cup. Each tea company has recommended steep temperatures, but there are a few hard and fast rules you can follow to determine what steep temperature to use:

White and **green** teas have delicate leaves, and therefore require below boiling water temperatures between 170 and 185 degrees Fahrenheit. Too high of a temperature will cook the leaves and ruin their delicate flavors.

Oolong teas should be brewed at temperatures between 180 and 190 degrees Fahrenheit.

Black and **Herbal** teas brew best at a full boil temperatures 208 and 212 degrees Fahrenheit.

Growing your own herbal tea garden

Best Herbs for Tea by Evelyn Gaspar

Here are my picks for the most flavorful and widely adapted "tea" plants for home gardens, along with tips for harvesting. All of these plants grow well throughout the United States. They are hardy perennials (up to -20oF) that do well in sun or part shade, except where noted.

* Bee Balm (*Monarda didyma*), a member of the mint family, is native to the eastern United States and Canada. Here in the drier West, I pamper it, making sure it's in water-retentive soil. Both the brightly colored flowers and the leaves, with their complex flavors of citrus and spice, are used for tea.

* Betony (*Stachys officinalis*) bears two- to three-foot spikes of violet flowers. The deep green, hairy leaves make a slightly astringent tea that's similar to a mild, fragrant China tea.

* Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*) is a two- to three-foot-tall mint-family member. The fuzzy, scalloped leaves have a lemon-mint flavor. If you have cats, you know they roll in it. My solution: Grow a surplus and dry the leaves on top of the refrigerator where the cats can't reach them. One caution: Pregnant women should avoid drinking catnip tea.

* Chamomile bears small, daisy-like flowers that have long been used in Europe for tea. German chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) is a two-foot annual. Roman or English chamomile (*Chamaemelum nobile*) is a lush green perennial ground covers of *C. nobile* bear small, yellow, button-like flowers. Although many references designate German chamomile as the sweeter type preferred for tea, I harvest the mature flowers of both chamomiles for a light, apple-scented tea.

* Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) produces seeds that lend a warm, citrusy flavor to tea. The leaves, used in cooking, are known as cilantro or Chinese parsley. This fast-growing half-hardy annual prefers cool weather. Plant in fall in mild climates; elsewhere, succession-plant through spring and summer.

* Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) is a three- to five-foot perennial often cultivated as an annual. In cold climates, you can succession-plant through the early spring and summer, and it will often self-sow. Here in the desert, I plant in fall. Fennel likes full sun. Both the feathery leaves and the seeds are used for licorice-flavored teas.

* Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*) is our family favorite. This floppy two-foot-tall member of the mint family has scalloped, lemon-scented leaves that make a soothing evening tea and add body to blends as well. It's listed for zones 4 and 5, but I've found it less hardy than other mints. A rooted cutting will overwinter indoors.

* Lemon Verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*) is, among all the plants with "lemon" in their names, the most like oil of lemon, hence the most strongly flavored. The leaves are long, slightly sticky and deciduous. This woody shrub prefers full sun and a light, well-drained soil. It's hardy only in zones 10 and 11. Elsewhere, grow it in a planter and winter it indoors (treat it first with insecticidal soap, as it's prone to whiteflies and spider mites).

* Mint (*Mentha* spp.) comes in many varieties, all of which have been used as teas. In my opinion, peppermint leaves (*M. x piperita*) are the only ones that stand up to drying and steeping, making a wonderfully refreshing iced tea. Like any mint, peppermint can be invasive. It tolerates drier conditions than spearmint. Here in the desert we give it shade.

* Roses (*Rosa* spp.) can be used to make two kinds of tea, those from the hips (fruit) and those from the petals. You can use the petals of any fragrant variety that's been grown organically. I gather them when the blooms are just past their peak. *Rosa rugosa* is one that's recommended for both petals and hips because it's a fragrant, pest-free rose that doesn't require spraying. Rose hip tea is red, with a tart lemon-orange flavor, and is a source of vitamin C. Cut slits in plump hips to speed drying and crush them slightly before brewing tea.

* Sunflower seed hulls, roasted and ground, were used by Native Americans and pioneers as a coffee substitute. I run a rolling pin over the seeds to crack them, then remove the kernels for baking and snacks. I place the hulls in a dry cast-iron frying pan and stir over medium-high heat for a few minutes until they're blackened. It's a smoky operation, but the aroma is toasty and inviting. The hulls add a hearty flavor to teas, as well as darken them.

* Yerba Buena (*Satureja douglasii*) is a low-growing perennial with wonderful menthol-mint-flavored leaves. A native of the Pacific redwood forests and hardy only to 10oF, it needs a climate that's moist and mild. We grew it in San Francisco, and miss it here in the desert.

Harvesting Aromatic oils are most concentrated when herb plants are in bud, so that's a good time to harvest, although you can certainly take cuttings here and there during the growing season. Cut back the entire plant by two thirds. In my region, I get about three cuttings before letting the plants go.

The plants listed here can all be used fresh for tea, or they can be dried first. To dry them, I spread the stems on trays in a warm, airy place and turn them twice a day. When they're dry (four to eight days), I gently strip off the leaves, buds or flowerheads and store them in closed containers.

I cut stalk fennel and coriander when the seeds are barely mature, but before they shatter, and invert them in paper sacks. In a few weeks, when the seeds have dropped to the bottom and dried, I funnel them into storage containers.

Can also use: Basil, Rosemary, Sage and Lavender