

Brewing Loose-Leaf Tea

Overview

Tea is a delicious and healthy drink that has been consumed by people for thousands of years. It consumed all around the world and comes in many varieties and flavors. In the United States, it is common to purchase prepackaged tea in teabags. However, some of the freshest and highest quality teas are purchased in loose-leaf form. People often prepare packaged tea because of the convenience. This article will demonstrate that brewing loose-leaf tea is a simple process.

Purchasing Tea

It is possible to purchase loose leaf tea in a grocery store, but the best quality tea will come from a specialty store. Tea can be purchased from online or local retailers.

The London Tea Room

<http://thelondontearoom.com>

Teavana

<http://www.teavana.com>

International Tea Importers

<http://www.teavendor.com>



Types of Teas

There are thousands of types of tea around the world, so the scope of this article will be limited to the common western teas. Common western teas can be following categories: Black, Green, Oolong, and White. All four types come from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. The difference of each is determined when the tea is picked and how it is prepared.



Black Tea is allowed to wither before it is picked. After being picked, it is rolled, fully fermented, fired, and then dried. Black tea has the most caffeine and the strongest flavor of the four tea types.



Oolong Tea, like black, is allowed to wither before it is picked. After picked, it is shaken and rolled to bruise the leaf edges. It is the partially fermented and then pan fried or dried.



Green Tea is sometimes allowed to slightly wither before being picked. After being picked, it is steamed, pan fried or fired, and then dried.



White Tea is picked before it withers. After being picked, is steamed and then dried.

Equipment

As with any job, tea preparation requires certain tools. The required tools are:

Teapot: Used to steep the tea. Teapots are most often made from glass, ceramic, or cast iron.



Glass Teapot



Ceramic Teapot



Cast Iron Teapot

Teakettle: Used to heat the water. You can use either a stovetop teakettle or an electric kettle.



Stovetop Teakettle



Electric Teakettle

Mesh Filter: Used to separate the tea from the water. The mesh filter can take various forms and may be made of metal or plastic.



Tea ball



Tea Basket

Utensils: A measuring cup and 1 teaspoon measuring spoon are used to measure the proper amounts of water and tea. The thermometer is used to measure the water's temperature.



Measuring Cup



Measuring Spoon



Cooking Thermometer

Preparation

- ❖ Fill the teapot with 8 ounces of water cold for each cup of tea. For a better tasting cup of tea, use filtered water. Pour the water into the teakettle. If you are using an electric teakettle, turn it on. If you are using a stovetop teakettle, turn the stove on high and place the teakettle directly on the burner.
- ❖ Measure 1 teaspoon of tea leaves for each cup of tea. Place the tealeaves into the mesh filter and place the filter into the teapot. Be careful to not overfill the filter so the leaves will have room to expand as they steep.
- ❖ When the water begins to boil, remove the teapot from the heat source. Check the water's temperature. Each type of tea requires a different water temperature. Let the water cool to reach the appropriate temperature before pouring over the tea leaves. Once the water is approximately at the proper temperature, pour over the tealeaves and let them steep. As with the temperature, the steeping times vary depending on the type of tea. Use the following chart to determine the correct temperature and steeping time.

Tea Type	Temperature	Steeping Time
Black Tea	203 F	3-5 minutes
Oolong Tea	203 F	1-9 minutes
Green Tea	160 F	1-2 minutes
White Tea	185 F	4-15 minutes

- ❖ After the tea has steeped for the proper amount of time, pour directly into a mug. Flavoring tea is a matter of personal preference. Some prefer to drink their tea plain, while others may choose to add cream and sugar or honey. It is also customary to enjoy sweets such as pastries, cookies, or muffins with a hot cup of tea.
- ❖ Green tea leaves can be reused for up to three cups. Simply remove the leaves from the water, place on a towel, and allow them to dry. Store the dried leaves until ready to reuse. Black, oolong, and white teas should not be reused, as they will produce a much weaker cup of tea. Tea leaves can be safely disposed in the trash or they can be composted.