



Danielle Beaudette

BY DANIELLE BEAUDETTE

We've heard about the numerous health benefits that tea offers. What we may not be aware of is that with the growing number of choices for our favorite summer beverage, many may not live up to these benefits. Preparing your own freshly brewed iced tea is simple, and looking back through history, this has been a long-time trend.

Using loose tea leaves for iced tea has been around since the early 1800s. It was first referred to in the southern states as a 'tea punch,' made primarily from China green tea and the heavy addition of sugar, sweet cream and liquor. In the early 1900s, inexpensive loose black teas from India, Ceylon, South America, and Africa became more widely available, so the choice for black versus green tea became more popular. The practice of adding sweet cream and liquor had all but disappeared, but more often than not, sugar was still a necessity.

In the mid 1900s, the commercialization of instant powdered teas and concentrates with added sugar became popular in most restaurants and available for home use. But unfortunately, the tea lover had to choose

convenience over quality. In the 70s, ready-to-drink (RTD) teas first appeared on convenience store shelves. Many were blended with corn syrup or cane sugar, with little amounts of tea. Today, we have not strayed far from these choices. Some ingredients are for preserving the tea as it sits on the shelf for an undetermined amount of time, or for coloring or flavoring. Most still use powders and concentrates. Growing research shows that these teas contain only a small fraction of the health benefits of freshly brewed teas.

The higher demand for healthier beverages by the aging consumer is being recognized by newcomers in RTD development. There are promising new products starting to hit the shelves. There are a small few who use higher quality loose tea leaves with no sugar or chemicals added, but at a high cost per bottle for the consumer.

Perhaps the solution is to go back to the practices of our forefathers by brewing iced on our own, but with a healthier option. To prepare the best tasting iced tea with the maximum health benefits, follow the recipe below and these few tips. It is important not to skip the brewing process when making iced tea. This brewing method increases tea's maximum antioxidants. You should drink your fresh brewed tea within 3 days of preparing it. Any type of loose tea leaves may be used to make your iced tea. Always begin with purified, filtered, or spring water to enjoy the full

flavor of the tea. If you can't resist the urge to sweeten your tea, we recommend using more natural products such as organic honey or organic blue agave syrup.

Brew a Tea Concentrate Using Loose Tea Leaves

To make 1 quart of iced tea:

- Prepare the water at the correct temperature for the type of tea you are using.
- Add 3 teaspoons of your preferred loose tea to a natural disposable filter or strainer.
- Pour 1 cup of the prepared hot water over the tea leaves.
- Steep for 12-15 minutes.
- Add three cups ice cold water. (Or 2 cups cold water and 1 cup ice.)
- Remove the tea leaves. (Use them again right away to make a second quart.)
- Sip slowly and enjoy!

Danielle Beaudette is the owner of The Cozy Tea Cart in Brookline, NH. One of 45 Certified Tea Specialists in the world, she continues to broaden her knowledge on tea through on-going studies with the Specialty Tea Institute, the World Tea Expo, and her travels to tea countries around the world. For more information call 603-249-9111 or visit her website at www.TheCozyTeaCart.com. ▲