

Most Frequently Asked Questions on Tea

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The first teas brought into this country were whole leaf teas and we continued to consume it until 1904. This is when Thomas Sullivan, a thrifty tea merchant, created the tea bag as a means to send smaller samples of loose tea to his customers. It was intended for the customer to take the tea out of the bag to steep it, but they found it easier to steep it in the bag; therefore, it was an accidental discovery by Thomas! Today, poorer quality, machine harvested tea is used for the tea bags. In addition, the paper used for the bags is bleached and chlorinated which reduces the shelf life and health benefits of the tea. In the past 20 years, this has led to consumers wanting to go back to the whole leaf tea for its health benefits and twice-longer shelf life. But this was not without hesitation. Since Americans are so used to the bag, steeping loose tea is somewhat of a mystery. Following are answers to your most frequently asked questions.



Plucking tea in the Nilgiri mountains of India ©

1. Where does tea come from?

All tea, whether white, green, oolong, or black tea, comes from the *Camellia sinensis* bush. Some of the major countries of origin for whole leaf tea are China, Japan, Taiwan, India, and Sri Lanka. It is in the factory, where the leaf is processed into the different categories of tea.

2. What is the difference between whole leaf tea and tea bag tea?

The production and processing of each is very different. Whole leaf tea is harvested by hand, and only the top two leaves and leaf bud are harvested. These newer shoots have more health benefits than the older growth on the bush. The better quality loose tea is harvested at 3000 to 8000 foot eleva-

tion. In the factory, the leaves are kept in their original size or broken into a variety of large leaf grades. Tea bag tea is grown at sea level on flat estates and harvested by machine. These machines take roughly the top 4-6 inches of tea and other bush parts off the top of the plant. In the factory, it is cut into tiny particles where the leaf is no longer recognizable and put into bleached and chlorinated tea bags.

3. Do all teas have the same caffeine content?

The amount of caffeine in a cup of tea is determined by how you are brewing your tea. If brewed properly at the right temperature and for the correct amount of time, the caffeine content will vary by the type of tea you are brewing. The soil, climate, elevation, and region will all play a part in the caffeine content. For this reason, we

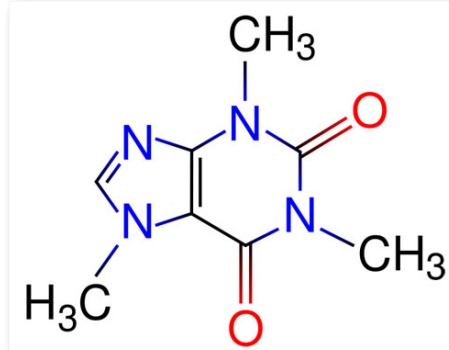


Shelves of tea at The Cozy Tea Cart ©

use the following estimated guideline:
White tea: 6-20 mg;
Green tea: 10-25 mg;
Oolong tea: 20-50 mg;
Black tea: 45-60 mg.

4. How are teas decaffeinated?

There are two major decaf. processes, CO₂ and ethyl acetate. Decaffeinating tea affects the amount of polyphenol substances in tea including catechins. The ethyl acetate method is



the most widely used with safe levels of chemical solvent – only about 30% of EGCG and other catechins are left offering minimal benefits. The natural CO₂ Method (carbon dioxide and water) keep about 95% of the polyphenols and catechins intact.

5. What is the shelf life of tea?

The shelf life of the tea bag tea is approximately 6 months. The shelf life of whole leaf tea that is blended with other ingredients is approximately one year and the shelf life of straight whole leaf tea (plain black, plain green, etc.) is a year and a half. Tea should be stored in airtight tins or dark colored ziplock bags away from heat and cold. A kitchen cabinet away from your oven is best and never in the refrigerator.

6. How do you steep whole leaf tea?

The easiest way to steep whole leaf tea is with an infuser. Simply place it in your mug, add one tsp. of your favorite loose tea, and steep! All teas are not brewed the same. For black teas and tisanes, bring the water to a full boil (approx. 212°F), and steep for 4-5 minutes, repeating for a second

infusion. For Oolong teas, bring the water to just under a boil (approx. 180°F-200°F) and steep for 1-2 minutes, repeating

up to 5 more infusions. For green and white teas, the water should be between 160°F and 180°F. Green tea should steep for 1-3 minutes and white tea for 2-4 minutes, and also can be re-infused a second time.



Stainless steel tea infuser.

For more information call 603-249-9111 or visit www.TheCozyTeaCart.com to buy teas etc right on-line. or read her bio on page 16. 