



## How 'bout a Cup of Tea?

January is National Hot Tea Month and it's a good time to answer tea questions that have come across my desk.

**Question: Will tea help me loose weight? Answer:** There is no magic bullet in tea that will miraculously make body fat disappear. That said, if you drink unsweetened tea as a replacement for sugared sodas this has the potential to cut enough calories from your diet that you may notice some weight loss. You have to remove 3,500 calories from your diet to loose a pound or use up an extra 3,500 calories by exercising to loose a pound. For example, if you drink two super sized, 44 ounce, soft drinks a day that is 820 calories, if you replace these with tea, even lightly sweetened with sugar, the potential exists to reduce your calorie intake by 650 – 820 calories per day – that can help you loose weight.

**Question: Is tea good for me? Answer:** There is emerging evidence that black, green and Oolong teas contain plant based chemicals that may help reduce the risk of heart attacks and cancer. It may also help to keep bones strong. Tea contains fluoride that may be able to help prevent dental cavities. It is important to remember that teas from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, which provides black, green, white and Oolong teas do have caffeine in it and caffeine can cause people to feel jittery and nervous. If you are on a caffeine restricted diet you will want to drink decaffeinated teas.



**Question: When I make tea at home it doesn't taste good. Answer:** There are several places good tea can go bad in the making. First, start with fresh cold water. Hot tap water and reheated water has less oxygen than fresh running tap water. Let the water run for a few seconds before you fill your kettle. You'll need about eight ounces of water for every cup of tea. If your water has an unpleasant odor or taste you will find your tea tastes better when made with bottled or filtered water.

While the water is heating, preheat your cup or teapot, by filling it with warm tap water and letting it sit for a few minutes. Pour boiling water over your teabag, tea infuser or loose tea. Let the tea steep three to five minutes for black or Oolong teas. Green teas are more delicate and you can use water that is not boiling, 160°-180°F. It is especially important to remember to not let your tea over steep because that can result in a bitter drink. Follow the directions on your tea package for best results.

**Question: What's the difference between high and low tea? Answer:** In the Victorian era high tea was the hearty meal served in home for working people, especially those that had jobs or duties that required them to work though the traditional dinner hour of eight o'clock. Afternoon tea was a very light meal, often toast and jam, traditionally served to ladies and gentlemen in the afternoon that was designed to tide them over until dinner at eight or nine o'clock. There is no low tea category.



Most formal teas are served with tea, cream or milk and sugar, and several sweet treats such as cookies, crumpets, scones, small sandwiches and tea cakes. Recent research suggests that the proteins in milk may interfere with the absorption of the healthy chemicals in tea. To make your afternoon tea time less heavy on the sweets you could serve apple and cheese slices, other fresh fruits or even toast and jam.

For more information on tea try these websites: <http://lancaster.unl.edu/fost/ciqtips-jam04-tea.htm> and [http://www.cspinet.org/nah/06\\_06/beverage.pdf](http://www.cspinet.org/nah/06_06/beverage.pdf)

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