

Time for Tea! Leader Guide



Lesson objectives:

- ◆ Discover how tea has become one of the most popular drinks of the world.
- ◆ Examine some of the claims of health benefits of tea.
- ◆ Experience flavors and fragrances of the various kinds and types of tea and herb infusions.
- ◆ Appreciate the cultural significance of drinking teas and other herbal beverages.

Lesson Preparation:

- Make several varieties of tea to taste at the lesson. Bring both bagged and loose tea to demonstrate the different ways tea can be made. Make at least one black, oolong, and green tea. Have an herbal tea available for those that may not drink tea because of the caffeine content. (Try roibos, or red bush for something international and different.) You may wish to serve SIMPLE refreshments with the tea. Ask members to bring assigned teas or tea pots, cups, infusers, tea cozies and/or refreshments. Have each participant bring a cup and saucer; bring a few extra for those who forgot or for guests.
- Obtain a Stash Tea Catalog (call 1-800-826-4218) or Upton Tea Quarterly (1-800-234-8327) to show your group the vast choices of tea that are available.
- Prepare yourself by going to a tea house or kitchen supply store and talk to the proprietor about tea supplies. If you cannot go to a store, go to the internet (see end of lesson for sites) and read about supplies that are available to make tea. (Most public libraries have internet access. Ask the librarian for help, if needed.)
- Take time to enjoy this lesson – plan on 1 ½ - 2 hours. Make a party out of it, but don't forget to cover the lesson in the festivities.

Introduction:

Ask participants to share with the group by answering the following question: What does “having a cup of tea” mean to you? If the group is large, divide them into groups of five or six to share their story. Have each group summarize what they shared.

Say: “In the hustle and bustle of life today, it is refreshing to take a break, sit down by yourself or with friends and enjoy a hot beverage. Taking breaks to rest and relieve the stress of the day can make a difference in our attitude and in our health. For many people this is done around a “cup of tea”. So let's take time for a cup of tea today.”

What is Tea?

Tea is one of the oldest and newest fad drinks today--chai, herb tea, fruit drinks with tea, green tea, white tea, black tea, red tea and more (the newest fad – bubble tea). Tea was first consumed in China and is now consumed by more than half the world's population. Tea is an aromatic stimulant, containing various polyphenols, essential oils, and caffeine.

The tea plant is a native of Southeast Asia and in addition to all of Asia, is now grown in mountainous areas of South America, Africa, and Turkey. It is all the same plant, *Camellia sinensis*, first cultivated in China

and found growing wild in India. Whether it is black, oolong, green or white depends on where the tea was grown and then how the tea is processed. There are more than 3,000 varieties of tea, each with its own flavor, body, color and aroma.

Leaf buds and young leaves are used in making tea, the age of leaves determining the taste and the name of the particular commercial variety. Orange pekoe is made from the youngest leaves and souchong from the fourth leaves. After picking, the leaves are either dried immediately and completely to produce green teas or partially dried and then allowed to ferment and to produce various kinds of black teas such as orange pekoe, pekoe, congou, and souchong. Oolong tea is partially fired and then steamed, having characteristics between green and black teas. Some teas are allowed to absorb the scent from flowers or seasonings, creating fragrances such as jasmine.

Herbal "teas" contain no true tea leaves, but are created from a collection of herbs and spices such as rosebuds, mint, hibiscus, cinnamon, red bush, yerba mate and more. These botanical ingredients are sometimes combined to create a variety of flavors and aromas.

The Fascinating History of Tea

It all began in China, Some Think

Tea is nearly 5,000 years old and was discovered, as legend has it, in 2737 BC by a

Chinese emperor when some tea leaves accidentally blew into a pot of boiling water. Tea soon became an important drink in all of China, not just for the royal household. A Buddhist priest then introduced tea to imperial Japan where its popularity spread. The elaborate Japanese tea ceremony developed as a religious and art form in Japanese society.

Leader, do not read this history to your group. Summarize the parts you find interesting. Some of these stories are very intriguing. If you wish, just review the history as given in the participants handout.

The Road to Europe—Via Ship

Europe was introduced to tea through a Portuguese Jesuit priest who visited China. Portugal gained the first right of trade with China and developed a trade route by which they shipped their tea to Lisbon. Dutch ships then transported it to France, Holland, and the Baltic countries. Tea became very fashionable in the Dutch capital, The Hague. The high cost of the tea (over \$100 per pound) made it the domain of the wealthy. As the amount of tea imported increased, the prices fell and sales expanded. Initially tea was available to the public in apothecaries along with such rare and new spices as ginger and sugar, by 1675 it was available in common food shops throughout Holland.

As the craze for things oriental swept Europe, tea became part of the way of life. Dutch inns provided the first restaurant service of tea. Tea remained popular in France for only about fifty years, being replaced by a stronger preference for wine, chocolate, and exotic coffees.

Great Britain was the last of the three great sea-faring nations to break into the Chinese and East Indian trade routes. The first samples of tea reached England between 1652 and 1654. Tea quickly proved popular enough to replace ale as the national drink of England. Queen Elizabeth I established the John Company to promote Asian trade. Its powers were almost without limit; it was the single largest, most powerful monopoly to ever exist in the world. And its power was based on the importation of tea. England introduced the commercial growing of tea in India. Through a merger with the East Indian Company, a complete and total trade monopoly on all commerce in China and India developed.

About the same time the East Indian Company was in power, Imperial Russia was attempting to engage China and Japan in trade. Russian interest in tea began as early as 1618. Caravans brought tea into Russia from China. Russia developed its own traditions with tea, using the samovar from the Tibetan "hot pot".

Tea in England

Tea mania swept across England as it had earlier spread throughout France and Holland. Tea was drunk by all levels of society, however, tea at the tea gardens were for the nobility, not the working class.

Prior to the introduction of tea into Britain, the English had two main meals-breakfast and dinner. Breakfast was ale, bread and beef. Dinner was a long, massive meal at the end of the day. Anna, the Duchess of Bedford (1788-1861) often experienced a "sinking feeling" in the late afternoon. Adopting the European tea service format, she invited friends to join her for an additional afternoon meal at five o'clock in her rooms at Belvoir Castle. The menu centered around small cakes, bread and butter sandwiches, assorted sweets, and, of course, tea. The practice of inviting friends to come for tea in the afternoon was quickly picked up by other social hostesses. The English traditions of serving low tea or afternoon tea became very popular for the upper class.

High tea was served around 6:00 pm and in reality was a hearty evening meal. It started as a working man's supper with strong tea served with meat, bread and butter, pastry, custard and cakes.

Another tea tradition of interest was the Tea Dance that began in 1816 and continued until after World War II. Friends and acquaintances would meet between 5:00 and 6:30 to drink tea and dance. This became popular with the new "working girl" in the city—a great way to meet men.

... and in America

When the Dutch were actively involved in trade throughout the Western world, Peter Stuyvesant brought the first tea to America to the colonists in the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam (New York). Settlers became confirmed tea drinkers. When England acquired the colony, they found that the small settlement consumed more tea at that time than all of England put together.

Though the early Dutch colonists were heavy tea drinkers, it wasn't until about 1720 that tea became popular with the English colonists. It became a special favorite of colonial women. Tea however, was very heavily taxed and contraband tea was smuggled in by the independent American merchants. Herbal teas were adopted from the Indians. As new and heavier taxes were put on the colonists, they rebelled and purchased mostly Dutch tea. England tried to force American women to purchase and drink only English tea, which resulted in women boycotting English tea until their rights were restored. It is interesting that the American Revolution soon followed and the Boston Tea Party led the way.

America entered into the tea trade soon after the Revolutionary War. America's newer, faster clipper ships out sailed English "tea wagons". The American merchants were able to break the English tea monopoly because of faster ships and they could additionally pay in gold rather than opium.

The two major American contributions to the tea industry occurred early in the 20th century. In 1904, iced tea was popularized at the World's Fair in St. Louis. Iced tea was created because the hot tea was not selling during the hot weather, so the promoters put ice in the tea, to the enjoyment of all. Cold tea was previously consumed with alcohol added and called "tea punch." In 1908, Thomas Sullivan of New York developed the concept of tea in a bag; a way to take tea samples to merchants that soon became popular to the consumer. (For more information on the history of tea, go to: www.stashtea.com.)

Types of Tea

Ask participants to name their favorite kind of tea. Is it hot, herbal, iced, with lemon, with milk, with sugar or without, etc?

(Using the participant's handout, review the types of tea that are available today: Black, Oolong, Green, White, Flavored, Herbals). Show some samples.)

Tea Grades and Classification

Tea leaves vary in size and are sorted by the size of the leaf. The grade designates leaf size only, not quality. Grades are leaf (Orange Pekoe are whole leaves classified by size), broken (Broken Orange Pekoe), fannings and dust (used in tea bags).

Tea leaves are also classified from where on the tea plant they were plucked, and also what time of year the harvest took place. A "fine picking" is comprised of the top "two leaves and a bud" of the tea plant. The "bud" is the immature leaf tip. Early in the growing season the young tips have a golden color. Teas produced at this time are referred to as Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe-GFOP. When the number of golden tips is relatively high, the designation of TGFOP is used, indicating Tippy GFOP. Indian teas are occasionally designated FTGFOP1 for Finest TGFOP, grade 1 and SFTGFOP1 for Super-Fine TGFOP, grade 1 or "I" for Imperial grade.

Varieties of Tea

(Look at the many varieties of tea available in the catalogs you have obtained. Note that they are often defined by the country of origin, the growing area, and even the specific estate they were grown on. Also look at the notes that follow the tea description, giving color of the tea, flavor and sometimes other serving suggestions. The participant handout has some listing of the more popular ones available.)

How to Make a Perfect Cup of Tea

Refer to the participant handout for this information. Make a pot of tea and show the various types of infusers and other tea accessories (such as bags, ball filters, tea cozies, warming pots, etc.).

What's Wrong with My Tea?

If your tea does not taste right, there can be several reasons. Try it again with new water and new tea.

- Harsh and bitter, funny "mouth feel"? – Ignore the "one for the pot", brewed too long, too much tea.
- Looks cloudy? – Poor quality of tea, poor water quality.
- Tastes metallic? – Quality of water, quality of tea.
- Looks scummy? – Usually water quality, poor quality small-leaf tea.
- Tastes dull and flat? – Poor quality tea, water was reboiled, did not use the water while it was still boiling (important for black tea).
- Tea is tasteless? – Tea stored too long (buy in small quantities).

How to Store Tea

Refer to the participant handout. Show some tins or containers that would hold tea—you may be able to find some at a second hand shop or around the house.

Taking Time for Tea

The drinking of tea as well as herbal “tea” or infusions has taken on different rituals in many countries throughout the world. (*Review the traditions as shared in the participant handout. If you have someone that knows about any of these traditions or has experienced drinking tea in another country, ask them to share their experience.*)

The Tea Table at Any Time

So you want to have a few friends over for tea, or you want to have a fun tea party for your granddaughter’s friends, just get started. For helpful hints, look in the library for party books, check out your local tea shop or go to the internet.

All you need to serve tea is a teapot, a few cups, some good tea, pastries, a pretty table and a friend to share it with. Linens can be simple or elegant, just be sure they are clean. Food to accompany the tea can be muffins, scones, sweet breads, toast, sandwiches, and more. Condiments can include jams, jellies, and butter. Tea is just fine by itself, before meals, after meals. Some people drink a cup of tea before dinner to help them slow down, relax and enjoy dinner without overeating.

Tea can be served any time in America, though many enjoy serving it in the British tradition. (*See Britain: Taking Time for Tea, Participants handout*) Who doesn’t want an occasional party? You may also want to treat yourself and your friends to an outing at a tea parlor--let someone else do all the work.

Health Benefits of Tea

Tea is not only a refreshing beverage, but may have some health promoting benefits as well. In Asian cultures, people have long believed that tea has medicinal power. Scientific research has only recently begun to confirm this. Research has indicated that all tea is good for you, not just green tea, as long as it comes from the leaf of *Camellia sinensis*.

Chemicals that make tea a potential health protector are called polyphenols. Green tea was thought to have the most of these chemicals; however it has been found that black tea has similar amounts.

The polyphenols have antioxidant activity—that is, they help deactivate cell-damaging free radicals. According to a test conducted for *Consumer Reports*, teas with the most antioxidant power are brewed from loose leaves or tea bags. Next come instant teas, and then bottled. Bottled teas are usually highly diluted: lots of water and sugar, and not much tea. Steeping tea for three to five minutes releases the highest level of antioxidants (UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, March 2000).

The caffeine content of tea also varies, depending on how much you use and how long you steep it. Green, black, and red (oolong) teas contain about 40 milligrams per cup, on the average, which is less than half the amount in a cup of brewed coffee (UC Berkeley Wellness Letter, March 2000).

Researchers have studied potential links between tea and health:

Heart attacks: There is some evidence that tea drinking (perhaps 3 cups of black tea per day) may be associated with a modest decrease in risk of heart attacks.

Cancer: Although studies have suggested that green and black tea may have a cancer–preventive role in animals, it’s not clear whether tea will help to prevent cancer in humans.

Bone density: Tea consumption has been positively associated with bone density in some studies, but whether it reduces the risk of fractures due to osteoporosis isn’t clear.

Dental health: Fluoride levels in green, oolong and black teas are generally comparable to those recommended for the prevention of dental cavities. Limited research suggests that tea consumption may be associated with fewer cavities, but more research is needed to confirm this.

Skin health: Though tea is now turning up in bath gels and other beauty products, it's doubtful that applying tea to the skin does any good.

It's unknown whether decaffeinated teas have the same polyphenols, and thus the same potential health benefits, as regular teas. Herbal teas don't have the same health benefits.

Although herbal teas may not have the combination of health-promoting chemicals in plain old tea, many people and cultures claim health benefits in using yerba mate, rooibos, and many other herbs. You may see drinks made from herbs called "herb infusions" or "tisane." Some common herbs that are used are peppermint, chamomile, rose hips, lemon verbena, licorice, and fennel. Some herbs can cause problems; chamomile, for example, can cause allergic reactions in people who are allergic to ragweed

The March 2000 issue of the *UC Berkeley Wellness Letter* suggests thinking of tea as a backup to a healthy diet and an adjunct to regular exercise and other good health habits—not a miraculous potion that will keep you well by itself.

More and more research results are being reported that give a positive spin to drinking tea...**so enjoy your tea!**

Leader: *Make tea for your group, serve with a simple snack. (See Lesson Preparation)*

Evaluation: *Please take time to complete the evaluation. Distribute the "Informed Consent Statement" and evaluation form. Read aloud the "Informed Consent Statement" and give participants 5 minutes or so to complete the evaluation. Collect the evaluation and return them to your local county Extension Office.*

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