

# Tea Time Traditions and Treasures



Teatime, anytime, is a delicious ceremony of friendship and sharing. Somehow tea has a magical ability to revive and refresh the body and mind. Rest a teacup on the arm of a chair and somehow the balance of life immediately improves. One quote sums up tea properties the best. “If you are cold it will warm you, if you are too heated it will cool you, if you are depressed, it will cheer you up, if you are excited it will calm you.

There are several different types of teas, but the best known is the Afternoon Tea. It all started with Anna, the Duchess of Bedford, over a century ago. In the Victorian era it was fashionable to serve dinner at the late hour of 8:30. With such an extended time between lunch and dinner the duchess would experience a “sinking feeling” every afternoon. She began requesting tea and petite sandwiches or little cakes daily. Soon, Anna began to invite friends to join in this ritual. Before long, a tradition had emerged.

Today, teatime can be informal and cozy sharing a cup of tea in favorite mugs with a friend and a handful of cookies. Or it can be a dress up tea with glittering silver pot and dainty sandwiches.

## ~~~ Tea Tasting ~~~

Teas are like fine wines in that their qualities reflect where they are grown. Altitude, climate and soil all affect the taste of a leaf. Different growing regions yield distinctive varieties of tea, while the processes by which the leaves are prepared result in the three types – black, green, and oolong. All real tea comes from the leaves of the plant *Camellia sinensis*, an evergreen shrub.

**Black tea**, the most popular in Western countries, is fully fermented. Its leaves are exposed to air to prompt a natural fermentation process that turns them a deep brown color and gives black tea its unique rich taste.

**Green tea** skips the oxidizing step. It has a more delicate taste and is light green/golden yellow in color. **Oolong** is between the two: more processed than green tea but less so than black tea. **Herbal “tea”** does not come from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, and therefore is not a tea. Herbal and “medicinal” teas are created from the flowers, berries, peels, seeds, leaves and roots of many different plants. Since research has focused on the health effects of regular tea, the potential health benefits of herbal tea currently are unknown.



### How much caffeine is in tea?

For people concerned about caffeine, a cup of brewed tea has only half the caffeine – about 50 milligrams – as a cup of brewed coffee. However, decaf tea has proved to offer less disease producing properties than regular green and black teas. This is because much of its flavonoids (a phytochemical) are destroyed by the decaffeinating process.

~~~ *How to make the perfect brew* ~~~

- ☛ Use a good quality loose leaf or bagged tea
- ☛ This must be stored in an air-tight container at room temperature
- ☛ Always use freshly drawn boiling water
- ☛ In order to draw the best flavor out of the tea the water must contain oxygen, this is reduced if the water is boiled more than once.
- ☛ Measure the tea carefully
- ☛ Use 1 tea bag or 1 rounded teaspoon of loose tea for each cup to be served
- ☛ Allow the tea to brew for the recommended time before pouring



~~~ *Recommended Brewing Times* ~~~

| Name             | Type   | Country of Origin         | Brewing Time | Milk/Black/Lemon | Characteristics  |
|------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------------|------------------|--|
| DARJEELING       | BLACK  | INDIA                     | 3-5 minutes  | BLACK or MILK    | Delicate, slightly astringent flavor                   |
| ASSAM            | BLACK  | INDIA                     | 3-5 minutes  | BLACK or MILK    | Full-bodied with a rich, smooth, malty flavor          |
| CEYLON BLEND     | BLACK  | SRI LANKA                 | 3-5 minutes  | BLACK or MILK    | Brisk, full flavor with a bright color                 |
| KENYA            | BLACK  | KENYA (AFRICA)            | 2-4 minutes  | BLACK or MILK    | A strong tea with a brisk flavor                       |
| EARL GREY        | BLACK  | CHINA OR CHINA/DARJEELING | 3-5 minutes  | BLACK or LEMON   | Flavored with the natural oil of citrus bergamot fruit |
| LAPSANG SOUCHONG | BLACK  | CHINA                     | 3-5 minutes  | BLACK            | Smoky aroma and flavor                                 |
| CHINA OOLONG     | OOLONG | CHINA                     | 5-7 minutes  | BLACK            | Subtle, delicate, lightly flavored tea                 |

**Both Green and Black Teas May Offer Health Benefits**

Green tea has long been credited with disease-preventing properties, but as more studies unfold, black tea is proving to hold as much promise as green tea in protecting against chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and stroke.

Tea is a plant product similar to fruits and vegetables. Both black and green teas contain naturally occurring compounds called phytochemicals that are powerful antioxidants. Research suggests that antioxidants may help protect the body's cells from the harmful effects of "free radicals." Free radicals are formed in the body as a natural by-product of metabolism and also as a product of radiation, pollution, smoking and other sources. Antioxidants "mop up" these free radicals, protecting the body from potential body cell damage.

## ~~~ *Typical Tea Room Menus* ~~~

It's easy to see why tea parties are becoming a popular way to entertain. They are suitable for almost any occasion. You can tailor it to a birthday, a shower or even a business meeting. Food suggested for a tea include:

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|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☛ Finger sandwiches     | ☛ Scones                    |
| ☛ Small meat pastries   | ☛ Small cakes               |
| ☛ Fruit tartlets        | ☛ Seasonal fresh fruit      |
| ☛ Assortment of cookies | ☛ Chocolates & mint candies |

Offer different spreads for scones and sandwiches. Butter and cream cheese can be either sweet or savory. Lemon curd and clotted cream have been popular accompaniments for scones in England and are finding favor in the States. A recipe for each is available online at: [www.culinarycafe.com/](http://www.culinarycafe.com/)

And, of course, the condiments that add zest to that cup of tea, include more than a bit of milk and some sugar. It's fun to experiment with these variations: crystallized ginger, honey, lemon (sliced paper thing or stud the rind with cloves), mint or stir some strawberry preserves into your tea.

## ~~~ *Tea Time Trivia* ~~~

- ☛ The handle on a teacup was an English invention, adapted from tankards used for hot toddies. Small ceramic teacups without handles have been favored in China for a millennium.
- ☛ Orange pekoe tea, a flowery, favorite blend, has nothing to do with oranges. It refers to the grade and size of the leaf picked.
- ☛ Queen Victoria was the first to drop a slice of lemon into an English teacup and started a custom that many of us enjoy today.
- ☛ Gunpowder tea refers to a particular processing that is done to green tea leaves; they are rolled into tiny pellets, actually resembling gun shot rather than gunpowder.
- ☛ Drink a whole 16-ounce bottle of sweetened tea and you get about 10 teaspoons of sugar, the same amount as in a 12-ounce can of cola.

### **WEBSITES TO EXPLORE FOR OTHER TEA-FULL TREASURES**

- ☛ The Tea Council – <http://www.teacouncil.co.uk/>
- ☛ Bigelow Tea - <http://www.bigelowtea.com/>
- ☛ Celestial Seasonings - <http://www.celestialseasonings.com/>
- ☛ The Stash Tea Company – <http://www.stashtea.com>
- ☛ Tetley Tea – <http://www.tetleyusa.com/>
- ☛ The Culinary Café – <http://www.culinarycafe.com/>
- ☛ Victorian Tea Parties – <http://www.victorianbazaar.com/tea.html>



## *A "Be Kind to Your Heart" Scone Recipe*

Don't be surprised if you use this recipe more than once! Get the kids or other family members involved to create this delight; then sit down with a cup of tea to enjoy.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees.

Yield: 8 to 10 scones

- ☛ 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- ☛ 2 tablespoons sugar
- ☛ 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- ☛ 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ☛ 2 tablespoons butter or margarine
- ☛ ½ cup raisins or dried cranberries
- ☛ ½ cup low fat milk

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- ☛ Measure flour, sugar, cream of tartar, and baking soda into a mixing bowl. Stir to combine.
- ☛ Using a pastry cutter or two forks, cut butter into flour mixture until it resembles fine crumbs. Add raisins.
- ☛ Add milk to flour mixture and mix to form a soft, slightly sticky dough.
- ☛ On lightly floured surface, push dough together a few times, working in enough flour to keep it from sticking to the surface.
- ☛ Pat dough into a greased, round 8-inch cake pan. Score into 8 to 10 pie-shaped wedges.
- ☛ Bake 10 to 12 minutes until golden brown.

When comparing scone recipes, check the amount of fat in relation to flour. Our recipe with 2 T. butter makes a pretty "lean" dough. Served warm, you do not lose flavor but win in nutrition.

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### **Variations ... OR create your own!**

*Apple Cinnamon:* add ¼ teaspoon cinnamon to flour and ½ cup chopped apples before adding milk.

*Orange Date:* Substitute ¼ cup orange juice for the same amount of milk. Add ½ cup chopped dates (figs or prunes) before adding milk.

*Whole Wheat and Raisin:* Substitute ½ cup whole wheat flour for ½ cup all-purpose flour. Add ½ cup raisins before adding milk.

*Recipe Source: Muffins & More, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Division of Nutritional Sciences*

Call the Consumer HelpLine at 631-727-7850, ext 374  
for answers to your questions about nutrition and food safety.

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