

## Encyclopedia of Tea

As a connoisseur of tea, you will find the most important terms relating to tea in our encyclopedia. In browsing our glossary, you will learn about tea and discover cultures in which tea drinking is not only a delightful pastime but also part of a more meditational approach to life.

In order to develop one's taste for tea and to appreciate the excellence of Darjeeling, one should know something about the many tea regions of the world, the huge variety of teas available on the market, and about the different ways in which tea is produced and prepared around the globe.

### A

**afternoon tea:** British mid-afternoon meal with sandwiches, scones, cakes, and pastries at which tea is the main beverage.

**agony of the leaves:** the relaxation of curled leaves during steeping

**American Revolution:** Revolutionary War, 1775-1783; the war for independence of the 13 British colonies from Britain, leading to the formation of the independent United States

**Anhui:** a province of east-central China, producing black tea

**aroma:** characteristic fragrance of brewed tea, imparted by its essential oils

**Assam:** a region in northeast India known for its strong, high-grade tea

**Assam tea:** a type of tea grown in Assam, India, known for its strong, deep red brewed color

**astringent:** the dry taste left by teas high in unoxidized polyphenols

**auction:** Tea auctions are held in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Kenya and Malawi. These auctions only sell teas from their particular areas. The London Tea Auction was held from 1679 till 1998 every Monday morning. It was the only international tea auction, where teas from all over the world were sold.

**autumnal:** tea harvested during the season of autumn

### B

**bakey:** a term describing over-fired teas

**ball tea:** China tea compressed in a ball to protect it against atmospheric changes

**Bangladesh:** a country of Southern Asia on the Bay of Bengal

**basket-fired:** Japan tea cured in baskets by firing or drying

**Bedford, Duchess of:** The 7th Duchess of Bedford is said to have invented afternoon tea, early in the 19th century, when she decided to take tea to starve off pangs of hunger between lunch and dinner.

**bergamot:** The oil of the bergamot orange, mixed with black tea, gives Earl Grey tea its characteristic flavor.

**billy:** Australian term for a tin pot used for boiling tea over an open fire

**billy tea:** tea made by Australian bushmen in billy cans

**biscuity:** term used for tea that has been well fired, often associated with Assam teas

**bitter tea:** tea brewing method used in Kashmir, a region of northwest India and northeast Pakistan; tea is boiled in a tinned copper vessel; red potash, aniseed and salt are added before it is served from a brass or copper teapot

**black tea:** a dark tea prepared from fresh-picked tea leaves that have been fully fermented before being dried; most common type of tea worldwide

**blend:** a combination of different teas for flavor consistency from season to season

**bloom:** a term describing the sheen of the tea leaf

**body:** a term describing the sense of fullness that the brewed tea imparts.

**BOP:** Broken Orange Pekoe; full-bodied black tea comprising broken segments of coarse leaves without tips; BOP is the smallest of the leaf grades

**Boston Massacre:** 1770; an incident before the \*American Revolution, when British soldiers shot into a crowd in Boston, killing five people

**Boston Tea Party:** 1773; A group of colonists, dressed as Indians, boarded ships of the East India Company and threw chests of tea into Boston Harbor. The colonists were protesting against the tea tax and the persistent efforts of Great Britain to legislate taxes without colonial representation in the British Parliament.

**BP:** Broken Pekoe; full-bodied black tea comprising broken segments of coarse leaves without tips

**brassy:** a term describing an unpleasant acidic taste, associated with improper withering of the tea leaves

**break:** an auction term describing a tea lot for sale, usually at least 18 chests

**brick tea:** tea leaves that have been steamed and compressed into bricks; the bricks are then shaved and brewed with butter and salt and served as a soup; once used as a form of currency

**bright:** a term describing a light-colored leaf or its resulting bright red brew

**brisk:** a term describing tea that is very astringent

**broken:** a term describing tea leaves that have been processed through a cutter, reducing leaf size

**broker:** a tea trader who negotiates the selling of tea from producers, or the buying of tea for packers and dealers, for a brokerage fee from the party on whose behalf the broker is working

**butter tea:** boiled tea mixed with salt and soda, strained into an urn containing butter and dried ground cereal

## C

**Cadbury, John:** In 1824, Cadbury opened a tea and coffee shop in Birmingham, England, which grew into the Cadbury Chocolate Co..

**caddy:** a tin or jar, used for holding tea; it takes its name from the Chinese or Malayan word 'catty', describing the weight of one pound of tea; in the past, tea caddies were equipped with a lock and key

**caffeine:** a bitter white alkaloid contained in tea or coffee and used as a mild stimulant

**Cambric tea:** a weak tea infusion with large proportions of milk and sugar

**camellia sinensis:** botanical name for the tea plant

**caravan tea:** tea taken by camel from China to Russia in the past

**catechins:** a class of polyphenol found in high concentrations in green tea, and lower and varied concentrations in black teas

**Ceylon:** former name of Sri Lanka and term for tea grown on the island

**Ceylon tea:** teas from Sri Lanka

**cha:** spelling of the Chinese and Japanese characters for tea

**chai:** Indian term for tea, often short for masala chai, or spiced tea, which is made from strong black tea with milk, sugar, and spices

**chanoyu:** Japanese tea ceremony.

**chest:** traditional container for shipping tea, made of wood and lined with metal foil. Originally, tea chests were lined with lead.

**chesty:** a term describing tea that has taken on the smell or taste of the wooden chest in which it was shipped

**Ching Wo:** black China tea from the Fujien province

**chop:** from the Indian chapna meaning to stamp a number, mark or brand. Each break of chop of tea is marked.

**Chunmee:** a Green China tea, so called due to its resemblance to the shape of human eyebrows.

**classification of tea:** Tea is classified by region of origin (China, Ceylon, Japanese etc.), by district (Darjeeling, Assam, Nilgris etc.), by the size of the processed leaf (Flowery Pekoe, Orange Pekoe etc.), or by manufacturing process (fermented, unfermented, semi-fermented).

**cloning:** cuttings taken from old tea bushes to produce new tea bushes; today most tea bushes are grown from clones or cuttings taken from older bushes

**collection:** Once a plucker has filled a basket or sack with tea leaf, it is taken to a collection point where it is checked and weighed before being taken to the factory

**congou:** a term used to describe all black China teas regardless of the area in which they are grown

**coppery:** a term describing a reddish infusion, associated with black teas of high quality

**country greens:** a term used to describe all black China green teas, other than 'Hoochows' or 'Pingsueys'.

**cream tea:** a meal featuring delicacies and sweets at which tea is the main beverage

**CTC:** stands for "crushing, tearing, curling", a manufacturing process to create tea leaves that impart a stronger infusion

## D

**Darjeeling:** (1) a region of Northeast India in the lower Himalaya Mountains; (2) a fine variety of black tea grown in the Darjeeling region of India.

**dhool:** a term describing the coppery, fermenting tea leaf.

**Dimbulla:** a district in Sri Lanka that produces full-bodied black tea.

**dust:** the smallest grade of tea, often used in tea bags because it creates a quick infusion.

## E

**Earl Grey:** a black China tea treated with bergamot oil, which gives the tea a scented taste. It was said to have been blended for and named after the 2nd Earl Grey when he was prime minister of Britain by a Chinese mandarin after the success of a British diplomatic mission in China.

**East Africa:** In the 19th century, British and Germans established tea plantations in the highlands of East Africa.

**East India Company:** The Dutch East India Company carried the first consignment of China tea to Europe in 1610. The English East India Company brought China tea from ports in Java to the London market in 1669.

**English Breakfast Tea:** a name for the tea blend which originally applied to China congou tea in the USates. In Britain it was a name applied to a blend of teas from India and Sri Lanka. Today it is used to include blends of black teas producing a full-bodied strong flavored tea.

**estate:** a tea growing property that may include more than one garden under the same ownership. In the past, tea estates were known as plantations.

## F

**fannings:** small grainy particles of leaf sifted out of better grades teas.

**fermentation:** the process of oxidizing green tea leaves to make black and oolong teas.

**fibrous:** teas that contain a high percentage of fanning.

**firing:** the process of rapidly heating the tea leaves, with hot air or in a wok, to stop fermentation and dry the leaves for a finished product.

**flaky:** flat, open leaf, poorly made tea.

**flat:** a term describing teas that lack astringency.

**Flowery Orange Pekoe:** FOP. It can be either whole leaf or broken leaf orthodox black tea with a lot of tip which gives it a finer quality.

**Flowery Pekoe:** a whole leaf black tea with the leaf rolled lengthwise.

**flowery:** a grading term that indicates leaves with light-colored tips.

**flush:** freshly-picked tea leaves, including the bud and the top two leaves of the tea plant.

**Formosa:** tea produced in Taiwan, primarily Oolong teas.

**full:** a term describing a strong, vibrant tea infusion.

## G

**Garden:** usually refers to a tea estate, sometimes used interchangeably with 'plantation'.

**Genmaicha:** green tea with toasted rice.

**Golden:** a term describing the orange-colored tips of high quality tea leaves.

**Gong fu:** a Chinese term meaning "performed with care". It describes a style of brewing that involves many repeated short infusions in a small pot.

**government standards:** applies to tea being imported into the US, which comply with the standards of purity, quality and fitness for consumption as defined by the Food and Drug administration of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

**grade:** a term used to describe the processed tea leaf. There are leafy grades, which are made from tougher and maturer leaves, and broken grades, which are made from more tender leaves. Leafy grades are: flowery pekoe (FP), orange pekoe (OP); pekoe (P); pekoe souchong (PS), souchong (S). Broken grades are: broken orange pekoe (BOP), broken pekoe (BP), BOP fanning, fanning, and dust. In modern commercial grading, 95 to 100% of production belong to broken grades.

**grainy:** well-made hard leaf.

**Great American Tea Company:** The Great American Tea Company was founded in 1859. It later changed to the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A & P).

**Green tea:** unfermented, dried tea, traditionally found primarily in China and Japan, but becoming increasingly popular in the West due to purported health benefits.

**Grey, Charles:** Charles Grey ended the monopoly on tea imports enjoyed by the East India Company in 1834. Earl Grey, a prestigious black tea flavored with bergamot oil, was named after him. See Earl Grey.

**gunpowder:** green tea that has been rolled into pellets, which unfurl in hot water to brew.

**gyokuro:** Japanese term meaning "pearl dew", referring to green tea produced in the Uji district of Japan from shaded plants.

## H

**handkerchief tea:** a tea which was grown in Formosa and which gets its name from large silk handkerchiefs that Chinese tea growers used to use to collect their very fine tippy tea.

**hard:** a term for pungent tea, often associated with Assam teas.

**harsh:** a term describing bitter teas.

**heavy:** a term describing a full, deep-colored infusion without astringency.

**high tea:** the name given to a meal which is a mixture of afternoon tea and dinner. It was the main meal of the farming and working class of Britain in the past.

**Hoochow:** a China Green tea.

**Hyson:** Chinese term meaning 'flourishing spring', and a brand of tea popular in the eighteenth century. It was drunk exclusively in Europe.

## I

**iced tea:** first reported at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. Richard Blechnynden had planned to sell hot tea, but became concerned that no one would want hot tea on a hot day. He began offering tea with ice cubes, and the new drink was a sensation.

**Intolerable Acts:** Coercive Acts. Punitive measures on the American colonies enacted by British Parliament in 1774. The British government was responding to the rebellious behavior of the colonists who participated in the Boston Tea Party. Colonists were enraged over Parliament's authority to delegate taxation without representation. Great Britain was determined to punish the colonies for these seditious actions. The Boston Port Act was the first of the Intolerable Acts. It closed the harbor until restitution was made for the destroyed tea. The Massachusetts Government Act canceled the colony's charter that was established in 1691. Massachusetts was reduced to a crown colony and a British military government was instated.

**invoice:** the document covering a shipment of tea. Synonymous with a break or chop.

**Ireland:** Ireland has the highest per capita tea consumption in the world; four cups per person per day.

**irregular:** uneven blend of leaf grades.

## J

**Jasmine:** black pouchong tea scented with jasmine flowers.

## K

**Kandy:** a city of central Sri Lanka. The last capital of the ancient kings of Ceylon.

**Kandy tea:** a Ceylon tea, grown at altitudes between 2000 ft and 4000 ft above sea level.

**Keemun:** a fine black tea from central China, typically hand-rolled and fired.

## L

**Lapsang souchong:** Chinese black tea that is fired over a pinewood fire for a smoky aroma and flavor.

**large:** term that describes the size of a grade, implies that it is too large for market requirements.

**leafy:** tea containing larger leaves than normal.

**light:** tea that produces a weak infusion.

**London Tea Auction:** The London Tea Auction was held from 1679 till 1998 every Monday morning. It was the only international tea auction, where teas from all over the world were sold.

## M

**manufacturing process:** The manufacturing process has four stages: 1) withering, 2) rolling, 3) fermentation, 4) drying. This process has a two-fold purpose: 1) to dry the leaf, 2) to allow the chemical constituents of the leaf to produce the quality peculiar to each type of tea. Only black teas go through all four stages. Green tea and oolong acquire their qualities through variations in the fermentation stage.

**make:** tea which has 'make' is carefully manufactured.

**Malawi:** African tea producers whose teas are mainly used for blending purposes.

**malty:** a slightly over-fired tea, sometimes desirable.

**Matcha:** powdered green tea from Japan used in the tea ceremony.

**meat tea:** another term for high tea.

**metallic:** the dry taste of some teas.

**milled:** tea leaf put through a cutter and ground.

**Mincing Lane:** the center of the tea trade in London.

**mixed:** presence of other grades in a particular grade.

**muddy:** dull, brownish infusion.

**muscatel:** reminiscent of vineyards; characteristic found in exceptional Darjeeling teas.

## N

**natural leaf:** whole leaf green tea from Japan similar to pan-fired but with less rolling; also known as porcelain fired tea.

**neat:** well-made teas of even appearance, conforming to relevant grade.

**nose:** synonym for aroma.

**Nuwara Eliyah:** a Ceylon tea, high grown at altitudes above 4000 ft sea level. The tea is light with a full citrus flavor.

## O

**Oolong:** a lightly fermented tea produced in China and Formosa.

**Orange Pekoe:** a grade of large, whole leaf tea.

**orthodox:** a processing method that imitates the larger leaf styles of hand-produced teas.

## P

**pale:** lacking color except in 'green' teas where liquors should be pale.

**point:** desirable brightness and acidity creating a fresh 'sparkle' on the tongue.

**pungent:** ideal combination of briskness, brightness, strength and flavor.

## Q

**quality:** essential characteristic of good tea.

## R

**raw:** a term for bitter tea.

**Rikyu:** Sen-no-Rikyu (1522-1591) is the most famous Japanese tea master. He raised the tea ceremony, which is said to embody the essence of Japanese culture, to an art form.

**rolling:** the process of crushing the leaves to activate certain enzymes and initiate fermentation. It results in the curled appearance of the final tea leaf.

**Russian tea:** Lemon tea; the name given to a class of hot tea liquor which has been poured into the glass over a slice of lemon. Sometimes sugar or honey are added.

**Rwanda:** an African tea producer, whose teas are used for blending purposes. Rwanda tea has a bright coppery color and brisk taste.

## S

**scented tea:** green semi fermented or black teas that have been flavored by addition of flower petals, fruits, spices or natural oils. Examples of these are Jasmine tea, Rose Puchong, Orange tea, Cinnamon tea or Earl Grey.

**self-drinking:** a term describing full-bodied tea that does not need to be blended.

**semi-fermented tea:** tea that has been partially fermented before being fired or dried.

**Sencha:** the most popular variety of green tea in Japan.

**Single Estate Tea:** a blend of teas from one particular estate or garden.

**smoky tea:** black tea from China and Formosa that has been smoked over an open fire.

**soft:** a term describing under-fermented tea.

**Souchong:** a large leaf black tea. Originated in China, Souchong tea was made from a small bush whose leaves were allowed to develop to a large size.

**specialty tea:** tea blended for a particular person or event or a blend of teas for a particular time of the day.

**Spring teas:** Formosa teas picked in April and May.

**stalk:** teas that contain pieces of stalk from poor plucking.

**Sullivan, Tom:** New York merchant. In 1909, Sullivan sent some tea samples sewn in muslin bags to potential customers. Finding they could brew the tea simply by pouring hot water over the bags, the customers clamored for more, and the tea bag was born.

**Summer tea:** Formosa teas picked in June and September.

## T

**Tang Dynasty:** 618-907; a Chinese dynasty known for its wealth and its encouragement of literature and the arts.

**tannin:** misleading term referring to tea polyphenols, which are different than the tannic acid associated with other plants.

**tarry:** another term referring to smoky teas.

**tat:** a wire mesh or burlap apparatus used to lay the leaves out for withering and fermentation.

**Tea Act:** to evade the tea tax, merchants in Boston bought tea smuggled into the colonies by Dutch traders. The Tea Act, passed in 1773, gave the East India Company exclusive rights to export tea to the colonies and exempted it from an export tax. The company carried the tea in its own ships and sold it through its own agents, which enabled it to sell the tea at a lower price than its competitors. In cities such as New York and Philadelphia, colonial merchants resisted the East India Company's monopoly on tea exports by canceling orders and refusing consignments.

**tea bag:** a small porous sack holding tea leaves to make an individual serving of tea.

**tea ball:** a small metal ball for holding tea leaves that are to be steeped in hot water.

**tea biscuit:** cookies or biscuits served with tea.

**tea caddy:** small box for holding loose tea.

**teacake:** see tea biscuit .

**teacart:** see tea wagon. .

**tea ceremony:** Chanoyu; an ancient ritual for the preparation, serving, and drinking of tea.

**tea dance:** a late-afternoon dance.

**tea factory:** factory where the plucked leaves are manufactured into black or green tea.

**tea garden:** (1) a garden open to the public where tea and refreshments are served; (2) a tea plantation.

**tea house:** a public establishment serving tea and refreshments.

**teakettle:** a covered kettle, used for boiling water, as for tea.

**tea party:** an afternoon social gathering at which tea is served.

**teapot:** covered pot in which tea is steeped and from which it is served.

**teapoy:** small table for holding a tea service.

**tearoom:** a restaurant serving tea and other refreshments.

**tea service:** a set of articles used in serving tea, e.g. matching cups and a teapot.

**tea set:** see tea service.

**teashop:** see tearoom .

**tea taster:** an expert judge of leaf and cup quality, tea at all stages of production, brokerage, blending, and final packaging.

**teatime:** the traditional time for serving tea, usually late afternoon.

**tea tree:** a tea bush or plant which has been allowed to return to its wild state and grow back into a tree.

**tea wagon:** small table on wheels, used for serving tea or holding dishes.

**theaflavins:** polyphenols unique to fermented black teas.

**theine:** synonym for caffeine.

**Ti kuan yin:** an especially dark and fragrant type of Oolong tea.

**tip:** the bud leaves on a tea plant.

**tippy:** a term describing high quality teas differentiated by the white or golden tips of the leaves.

**tippy teas:** teas with white or golden tips.

**Tisane:** herbal teas, i.e. teas produced from the leaves of plants other than the tea plant.

**Townshend Acts:** In 1767, Parliament passed the Townshend Acts, which levied taxes on British commodities imported in the colonies. In opposition to these Acts, colonial merchants boycotted British imports, and citizens rioted in the streets. By 1770 colonial resistance to the taxes was so strong that Parliament repealed all of the Townshend Acts except for a tax on tea.

**TuoCha:** a type of brick tea using Pu erh tea pressed into a bowl-shaped brick.

**Twankay:** a low grade China green tea.

**two (leaves) and a bud:** a term describing the part of the tea plant that is typically harvested, i.e. the top two leaves and the bud.

## U

**green pathuneven:** The term refers either to tea leaf composed of uneven pieces or to infused leaf that contains red, green and black colors due to uneven withering, fermentation, or rolling.

**Urasenke:** one of the main schools of the Japanese tea ceremony.

**usucha:** thin tea.

**usuki:** thin tea container.

**Uva:** a district in Sri Lanka that produces a tea of great subtlety.

## V

**vintage:** leaves that share the same harvest.

## W

**weak:** refers to very thin liquor.

**well twisted:** tightly rolled or twisted leaf; indicates ideally withered tea.

**white:** a type of very light green tea; the term refers to the white hairs on the picked tea bud.

**winey:** a term describing aged, mellow teas, as with some Keemun teas.

**wiry:** refers to well twisted Orange Pekoe which has long, black, even sized twisted leaf.

**withering:** the process of allowing the fresh leaves to dry after plucking, before fermentation.

**woody:** a term describing an unpleasant hay taste in black tea; often due to long storage.

## X

## Y

**Yixing:** pronounced [ee-hsing]; a region in China known for its purple clay, and the unglazed teapots produced from it.

**Yunnan:** black tea from the Yunnan province of China. Along with Assam, this region was the original site of wild tea plants.

## Z

**Zen Buddhism:** a school of Mahayana Buddhism that asserts that enlightenment can be attained through meditation and self-contemplation.