

Tea 101

TEA. It has been called *The Cup of Humanity*. It is the most consumed drink on our planet, not counting water. But what is it?

Tea is a beverage made from the dried leaves of a flowering evergreen shrub called *Camellia Sinensis* (pronounced: cam-MEHL-ee-ah sin-INN-sis). Tea plants will grow into a tree if left undisturbed, but cultivated plants are pruned to waist height for ease of plucking their leaves. Originally native to Eastern and Southern Asia, it is now also grown successfully in Africa and South America. While dozens of countries cultivate Tea, White tea is primarily grown in the Fujian province of China; green is primarily from Japan; oolong, mainly from Formosa (Taiwan); and black, primarily from Kenya, India and Sri Lanka.

Four main types of Tea

White (barely processed): White tea is made from young tea leaves and buds picked before the leaves fully open and then sun dried. White tea is known to be delicate because it is so minimally processed.

Green (minimally processed): The leaves that make green tea are picked and then briefly cooked using either steam or dry heat and then dried, to prevent too much oxidation.

Oolong (partially processed): Oolong tea is made from more mature Tea leaves. It falls somewhere in between black and green, and is therefore its own category. While Black tea leaves are fully oxidized and Green tea leaves are barely oxidized, Oolong is partially oxidized.

Black (highly processed): oxidation and processing is what distinguishes black teas from the rest. The leaves are withered, rolled, oxidized and fired. The lengthier oxidation process causes the tea leaves to develop into dark brown and black colors.

What if I don't like Tea?

If you think you don't like Tea, you may have only had black tea that was perhaps steeped too long, which caused it to have a bitter taste. Before you give up on Tea, try an herbal instead. Read on to learn why herbals are not actually "Tea". Add one of our French sugar cubes to any of our Teas or herbals, for a bit of extra sweetness, and you're sure to be pleased.

So, what do you mean herbals aren't Tea?

What is commonly referred to as Herbal "Tea" is not actually Tea, meaning it does not contain leaves from the Tea plant. Instead, herbal "tea" can be a blend of various leaves, fruits, bark, berries, spices, flowers etc, belonging to almost any edible non-tea plant, and prepared *like* tea, but technically not Tea (think of it like drinking hot juice). Common herbals include mint, chamomile (a European plant of the daisy family) and rooibos (pronounced: roy-boss; an evergreen shrub from South Africa).