

food now



Turn Over a New Leaf

Tea is brimming with benefits, and there are more ways than ever to drink up the goodness. We teach an ancient brew some fresh tricks. *By Marygrace Taylor*



Over a thousand years old, tea is the original wonder drink for good reason: Thanks to a potent mix of antioxidants and caffeine, it can boost heart health, bone strength, metabolism, and even mood and energy levels, according to a recent series of studies in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Not to say you should sip it solely for the health perks. There's just something nice—almost meditative, really—about tucking a tea break into your day. Enhance the quality of your me-time teatime with these trends.

Eat Smart

Specialty Sips

In bars and teahouses or at home, you can get your tea fix in smoothies, lattes, and even cocktails, says Jennie Rippes, founder and CEO of Owl's Brew, a line of tea blends crafted especially for cocktails. Try these easy DIY spins.

Matcha Kale Smoothie

Add a scoop of matcha to a smoothie with kale, banana, coconut water, and ice.

Earl Grey Arnold Palmer Cocktail

In a tall glass, combine six ounces cold Earl Grey tea steeped with lemon, one ounce vodka, and one tablespoon agave nectar. Garnish with lemon slices.

Vanilla Almond Chai Latte

Steep three teaspoons chai tea in six ounces hot water for five to six minutes. Mix with six ounces warm vanilla almond milk (sweetened or unsweetened, to taste), sprinkle with freshly grated nutmeg, and serve.

NOT JUST FOR DRINKING

Treat tea like an herb or spice to add bold flavors to a dish without loading it with salt, sugar, or fat. Green tea's crisp, fresh essence pairs perfectly with fish and vegetables, while sturdier black teas stand up to rich or sweet foods like meat or pastries, says Alexis Siemons, a Philadelphia-based tea consultant and culinary tea expert. Three more ideas:

RUB

Make a flavor-packed rub with two tablespoons green tea, one tablespoon each lemon and orange zest, one teaspoon ground ginger, and ½ teaspoon salt; rub on olive oil-coated chicken, fish (like halibut or tilapia), or tofu before cooking.

SOAK

Rehydrate dried fruit or dried mushrooms in brewed tea for an extra hit of flavor and antioxidants, or cook whole grains in tea instead of water.

BAKE

In muffins, cakes, or other treats, add one to two tablespoons of ground tea leaves per cup of flour, or add tea-infused milk to a batter by steeping two teaspoons tea in eight ounces of hot milk for 10 to 15 minutes. Hello, chamomile cookies!

GEAR UP

Get the most out of your tea with these smart brewing tools.



KETTLE

A must, since tea made with microwaved water can have an off taste. "Choose one based on volume," says Jessica Evans, brand manager at Zhi Tea Gallery in Austin, Texas. OXO's Classic Tea Kettle holds a modest 1.7 quarts of water (\$40, oxo.com).



ICED-TEA MAKER

Perfect for spring. A device like Takeya's Iced Tea Maker is a steeping vessel plus pitcher that cools two quarts of hot-brewed tea in 30 seconds flat (\$25, takeyusa.com).



GRAVITY INFUSER

A convenient way to make a full-flavored brew. When your tea is done steeping, the infuser filters out the loose leaves. Try Zevro's Simpliss's Tea-Direct Immersion Tea Maker (\$25, zevro.com).

Eat Smart

SET YOUR TEA FREE

Tea bags earn convenience points, but when it comes to flavor, loose-leaf wins. That's because tea leaves, which are compressed into tiny balls during processing, need room to unfurl and release their aromatic compounds into the water. With prebagged tea, the leaves are inhibited and can't expand fully, says Elyse Petersen, founder of Tealet, an online farmers' market for small tea producers.

All types of tea come in loose form, and brewing the leaves is simple: Just put them in your mug or cup and pour hot water on top (six ounces of water per teaspoon of tea), letting the leaves sink to the bottom as they steep. Check the package for water temp and timing instructions, since each variety has a unique perfection point. Take care not to overbrew—it can turn tea bitter—then strain and enjoy. If filtering is a pain, go for a gravity infuser (see one on page 82) for a debris-free cup.



You won't find whole leaves like these in those little white bags, which are often full of lower-quality shards instead.

Meet Your Matcha

Matcha, or green-tea powder, is whisked with just a few ounces of water to create a petite, frothy drink. It's the tea world's espresso: more concentrated and higher in caffeine than regular green tea.

While other types of tea are grown in full sun, matcha's leaves are shaded for several weeks before harvesting, which makes them pump out extra chlorophyll and turn a vivid green. The leaves are then hand-picked, steamed, dried, and ground to be sold as matcha powder in tea shops or online. "It's very smooth and full-bodied, almost with a touch of sweetness," says Jessica Lloyd, cofounder and COO of the matcha green tea company Panatēa.

It's also crazy good for you. With most teas, you don't consume the whole leaf, just the liquid. So you get some—but not all—of the antioxidants in your cup, says Lloyd. But with matcha, you sip even more free-radical fighters. ■



WH Online

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