

Social History of Tea

Introduction

This presentation should last approximately 45 minutes and can be divided into three major components:

- The history of tea
- The process of tea: from the tea leaf to your cup
- Tea and health

Background: Tea Association of Canada

The Tea Association of Canada is a not-for-profit association of leading companies and tea producing countries including Sri Lanka, Kenya, India, and Bangladesh. We act as an impartial source of information for general tea knowledge, industry regulations and Canadian tea statistics, as well as promoting awareness of tea and its' health benefits. Our mission is to provide proactive leadership on behalf of all our members in the areas of advocacy, generic promotion and education.

The objectives of the Tea Association of Canada are:

- Be the leading tea advocate with government and agencies in relation to the education of the industry and the development of policies;
- Develop generic promotion of tea based on core health messages through Canadian media and key influencers in major geographical markets;
- Provide continuing education to members on the overall tea category through various member events and communications;
- Provide value added services to retain and attract new members;
- Ensure the long-term viability of the Tea Association as a resource for the industry

History: Tea Beginnings

The origins of tea can be traced back to 2737 BC in China, under the reign of Emperor Shen Nong. Chinese Emperor Shen Nong was known by many as the “Divine Healer” and was known to have practiced different herbal medicinal techniques. Accepted legend explains, the Emperor was traveling and stopped for a rest and to drink water. It was necessary to boil the water for purification, and while boiling the water some leaves from a tea tree close by fell into the water. The scent and aroma the tea leaves brought to the boiling water was to the liking of the Emperor and the first cup of tea was made.

Tea first left China in 805 when a Buddhist monk brought tea with him on a trip to Japan. Over this time period, under the Tang Dynasty tea trading also began with India, Turkey, and Russia. The evolution of tea continued in China and Japan under the respected Emperors and Dynasties. In 1422 a Zen Buddhist priest created the Japanese Tea Ceremony. The Buddhist priest, Murata Shuko, created the ceremony named, ‘Cha No Yu,’ or ‘hot water for tea.’

17th Century: Tea in Europe

In 1610 the Dutch traders trading with Chinese tea exporters first brought tea to Europe. In the mid to late 16th century Holland and France were the main consumers of tea in Europe. England’s response to the rising presence of tea in Europe included Elizabeth I granting the English East India Company sole rights to import tea to England. In 1669 the English East India Company made the first shipment of tea from China to England. In the beginning, both black and green teas were imported into England. When Thomas Garway first sold tea in London at his coffee house, Garway’s Coffee House, the tea movement in England began. Catherine of Braganza and King Charles II were the first monarchs to adopt tea drinking. Initially, sugar became popular as an additive to tea, however milk was not generally accepted as a supplement until

the late 17th Century. The nobles began hosting afternoon tea parties where light foods were served along with tea as a mid day snack before dinner in the evening.

18th Century: Growing Popularity

In the early times, as was the custom with most novelties in England, only the royal family, aristocracy and elite civil servants drank tea. However, as time passed, similar to other new products in England the practice of tea drinking became popular beyond just the royal classes in England. With the turn of the 18th century there were nearly 500 coffee shops in London. Popularity of tea spread to the working class. This was exemplified through the rise of employers providing tea in workplace break rooms and the adoption of tea as a breakfast and after-dinner drink. Tea also served as an alternative to alcohol for people at parties and in the morning for breakfast. In the early times tea was very expensive for consumers to buy. With the deregulation of tea, importing taxes were established and rose to 119%. Tea smuggling resulted. In efforts to end tea smuggling, Prime Minister William Pitt reduced the taxes to 12%. Tea evolved to become the symbol of the temperance movement in England.

19th Century: Afternoon Tea Time

Tea drinking became customary in the late afternoon before an evening dinner. Afternoon tea originated in the 1830's; Anna Maria, 7th Duchess of Bedford is said to have been the first to have the idea of enjoying a pot of tea and something to eat in the middle of the afternoon. Elegant afternoon teas became popular amongst upper, upper middle and even working class people. Two different types of tea ceremonies emerged High Tea, and Low Tea. High Tea became the primary meal of the day for the working class; it consisted of meat and vegetables along with tea. Low tea became custom for the wealthier classes and it was an afternoon snack, which consisted of small desserts along with tea. Porcelain and linen companies gradually started to manufacture tea sets, tablecloths, napkins, and tray cloths to provide all the equipment needed for afternoon tea parties. Tea parties were created for all sorts of different occasions. Tea gowns became popular in the 1880's as a form of teatime dress that was both comfortable and elegant and very feminine.

The 19th Century also saw increases in the diversity of production nations of tea. The British started to grow tea in Assam in the 1830's, then established plantations in Darjeeling, Nilgiri and elsewhere in India. Tea production in Ceylon (Now Sri Lanka) started in the 1860's and 70's.

20th and 21st Century: Industry Expansion

Tango tea dances became popular when the Tango reached London from Argentina in 1910. As new hotels opened in the major cities, tea lounges were incorporated into the design of the public spaces. The tea bag was introduced in the 1960's in Britain and now accounts for 93% of all tea brewed in the UK. New plantations were established in Africa; today 50% of all tea imported to Britain comes from Kenya. Tea took a less important part in British life from the 1950's to the 1980's when fast food chains and coffee bars became more popular than tearooms. In the early 1980's, a renaissance of interest in tea led to new tearooms, new books, a wider variety of teas available in supermarkets etc., and more awareness of tea as a healthy drink. Green tea also saw resurgence among British tea drinkers in this era. Hotels and tea rooms are far more aware of the need to serve quality, well-brewed tea: The UK Tea Council now runs annual competitions to find To Tea Place, Top London Afternoon Tea, Top Country House Hotel and Top Regional Hotel.

The Process of Tea Creation

Tea originates from the tea plant or the Camellia Sinensis plant. There are four different types of tea, black tea, green tea, oolong, and white tea. The difference between the respected types of tea is the fermentation or oxidization level of the tea leaves. Black tea consists of fully oxidized tea leaves, this means that the

leaves are exposed to air before the process of firing begins. Green tea is not allowed to oxidize before the firing process begins. Oolong tea has a browner colour than black tea and is allowed to partially oxidize or semi-ferment before the firing process. Finally, white tea is the finest type of tea and it is made partially from the tea bud making it slightly more rare than the other types of tea.

Tea leaves are generally picked every 6 to 7 days and only the top leaves on the plant are picked to ensure fresh and fine quality leaves to produce the best tea. Moisture is removed from the leaves by air being blown through the leaves. Green tea or loose leaf tea is then treated to gain the appearance that it will have. Tea that is going to be used in tea bags goes through a slightly different process. Black tea to be used in tea bags is crushed to allow for the oxidization to occur and then processed at high temperatures achieves the correct taste when consumers drink the tea. Next, stalk, which can appear in the tea leaves as a result of the processing, is removed from the tea leaves. The final stage in the bagged tea process is to run the leaves through a number of meshes to make a very fine mixture to be put into tea bags for consumer consumption.

Tea and Health

Countless scientific and medical studies have garnered evidence that tea is a drink that can be very good for one's health. Tea is naturally rich in flavonoids which act as antioxidants. Tea contains more antioxidants than orange juice or apple juice. There is considerable evidence that antioxidant compounds in fruits and vegetables contribute to overall health, by absorbing free radicals, which occur naturally in the body. Antioxidants help reduce cell damage that has been associated with heart disease. There is mounting evidence to suggest that antioxidant-rich foods may play a role in reducing the risk of certain cancers, heart disease and strokes. Tea also contains less caffeine content per cup than coffee, contains no calories, additives, or preservatives.

Medical professionals have concluded in recent studies that tea can be a healthy beverage and can help to prevent some major diseases. At the Second International Scientific Symposium on Tea & Human Health Provides Further Proof of Tea's Potent Antioxidant Power, Disease-Fighting Capabilities there were numerous presentations made by medical professionals on the health benefits to drinking tea. Studies by Dr. Junshi Chen presented at the conference revealed that recent research indicates tea drinking may help to prevent oral cancer. Dr. Chen explained, "The results indicate that tea treatment may delay the progression of pre-cancerous lesions into oral cancer." Dr. Gary Beecher summarized the health benefits of tea in his presentation, "one cup of black tea provides substantial amounts of compounds which have been shown to have protective effects against cancer and heart disease in the human and animal studies presented."

Further information on the health benefits of tea can be found at the Tea Association of Canada's website: www.tea.ca