

Summer Tea Drinking

By Ameeta Sharma

Flavours of winter for tea automatically include herbs like ginger, cinnamon, cardamom and others that provide typical relief and much needed warmth to the throat. But come summer, one wants to stay away from these heat inducing herbs and additives to tea. Even the masala tea addicts either reduce their tea intake or change the style of tea they drink.

In some ways, even our tea drinking, more or less like the alcohol consumption, has been changed due to the way the English enjoy their tea – steeped for a few minutes but with addition of milk and sugar. In neighbouring France and Germany tea is preferred black, maybe with a touch of lemon juice and at the very most some sugar. And tea like that could withstand any change of season.

Tea & Health Study

In fact a study has led to the discovery that people who drink black tea have lower stress hormone levels in their body. Another study found people who drank tea were able to de-stress more quickly than those who drank a fake tea substitute. Those who drank a black tea concoction four times a day for six weeks were also found to have lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol in their blood after a stressful event, compared with a control group who drank a placebo.

The study by researchers at University College, London (UCL) and published online in the journal *Psychopharmacology*,



divided 75 male tea drinkers into two groups and monitored them for six weeks.

They all gave up normal tea, coffee and caffeinated drinks with one group given a fruit-flavoured caffeinated tea mixture made up of the constituents of an average cup of black tea.

The other group was given a caffeinated placebo identical in taste but devoid of the active tea ingredients.

All the drinks were tea-coloured, but were designed to mask elements such as the smell, taste and familiarity of the brew, to eliminate factors such as the comforting effect of drinking a cup of tea.

Both groups were subjected to “challenging” tasks, while their cortisol, blood pressure, blood platelet - or cell structure - and self-rated levels of stress were measured.

In one task, volunteers were exposed to one of three stressful situations - threat of unemployment, a shop-lifting accusation or an incident in a nursing home - where they

had to prepare a verbal response and argue their case in front of a camera.

The tasks triggered “substantial” increases in blood pressure, heart rate and subjective stress ratings in both of the groups.

But 50 minutes after the task, cortisol levels had dropped by an average of 47 per cent in the tea drinking group compared with 27 per cent in the fake tea group.

Professor Andrew Steptoe, of UCL's department of epidemiology and public health, said: “Drinking tea has traditionally been associated with stress relief and many people believe that drinking tea helps them relax after facing the stresses of everyday life.”

The Chinese Tea

As per traditional Chinese medicine, people should drink tea according to their physical fitness as well as choose the right tea in different seasons of the year. Scented tea is recommended for Spring; green tea for Summer, oolong tea in Autumn and black tea in Winter.

The scented tea helps in emitting the pathogenic cold stored up in human body through winter with its full aroma activating the generation of Yangqi. The green tea is recommended for summer for its bitterness and cold properties which helps remove heat and toxic substances, quenches thirst and additionally strengthens the heart. Oolong tea in autumn is neither too hot nor cold, and helps dispel the extra heat within the body, it also helps resume healthy salivation. Black tea is idea for winter with its pleasant natural sweetness and temperateness. It contains rich protein to help digestion while nourishing and strengthening our bodies.

Tea & Europe

While England is famous for its cuppa through the day it is largely the teabags of different companies and tea flavours that



are popular. And it is just about always enjoyed with milk and sugar unless it is a delicate Darjeeling (though some English people would add a drop of milk to that too). Of course the afternoon tea in England with its accompaniments or the 'Elevenses' in the morning at 11 O'clock have been made famous by what is eaten with your fine tea from the pot.

In neighbouring France and further down in Italy it is coffee that is popular through the day – black or white, espresso or cappuccino. However, Germany is a different story. Here drinking tea is a culture worth noticing. I remember a fairly small hotel in Munich with its tiny single restaurant that opened only for breakfast had more than a dozen options including Lopchu and the South African Red tea – Rooibos! And the Germans tend to take their tea black, insisting that milk ruins a good tea.

Limits for Tea Consumption

There are individuals who like to have a cup of tea handy almost all waking hours. Families are known to enjoy tea in the morning, evening and before and after each meal. While personal consumption levels may vary, unless you are taking your tea without any additives there is definitely a healthy limit to the quantity of tea you should take.

Public health nutritionist Dr Carrie Ruxton, and colleagues at Kings College London, looked at published studies on the health effects of tea consumption.

They found clear evidence that drinking three to four cups of tea a day can cut the chances of having a heart attack. Drinking three or more cups of tea a day is as good for you as drinking plenty of water and may even have extra health benefits, say researchers.

Dr Ruxton in yet another study also said: "Drinking tea is actually better for you than drinking water. Water is essentially replacing fluid. Tea replaces fluids and contains antioxidants so it's got two things going for it."

"Studies on caffeine have found very high doses dehydrate and everyone assumes that caffeine-containing beverages dehydrate. But even if you had a really, really strong cup of tea or coffee, which is quite hard to make, you would still have a net gain of fluid. "Also, a cup of tea contains fluoride, which is good for the teeth," she added.

There was no evidence that tea consumption was harmful to health. However, research suggests that tea can impair the body's ability to absorb iron from food, meaning people at risk of anaemia should avoid drinking tea around mealtimes.

Ideal Tea Making Technique

We are not speaking here of the roadside tea vendor who boils and boils the mixture with milk and sugar. We are speaking here of the tea in a tea service – steeped for just the right number of minutes in the teapot before being poured in the cup without further delay. Where second cup is brewed again and is not just a by product of added water to remaining liquid and already soaked tealeaves.

The first step of tea making is selection of a good blend of tea. Quality matters and preparation of tea would depend on the quality of tealeaves. Teabags have become more popular but nothing like the original long curly leaf sold in an airtight and waterproof packaging. If tea simmers for longer it would get astringent in flavour and would be less drinkable. Water used for making tea should be boiling. Of course the joke of long time practice of throwing away the tea water and chewing on the leaves is not known for its authenticity.



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When using a teapot it is a level tea spoonful of leaves for each person and one for the pot. A good rule when the drinkers are not more than 6 or maximum 8 to a pot. Tea could be made at the table by pouring water from the kettle into the teapot. The sugar, cups, spoons, cream or milk or lemon wedges must be arranged in advance. A small tea strainer is necessary.

Use of tea cosy is still popular though it does keep the tea warm for a while, it also encourages you to brew more than your first requirement, rendering the remaining liquid in the teapot bitter after a few minutes.



Which tea you prefer may depend on personal choice and availability. There was belief that green is better than black but a study group is now looking at whether green or black tea is better for you. Previous studies may have been confounded by the fact that black tea is often drunk with milk,

while green tea is not.

Accompaniments to Tea

A good tea ceremony in the evening invite needs to include some savoury and sweet items. Most popular in summer months are cucumber sandwiches and lemon cake slices. In winter the English scone with cream and fresh fruit preserve are more popular. Of course this has been somewhat tweaked to fit Indian tastes in India and could include anything from samosas to dhoklas! That is Indianisation of a beverage that is truly international.



Mridul Tiwari lives and operates out of Jaipur. Her association with tea spans to her grandfather who owned tea gardens which are still tended by the family members. Mridul has worked in all facets of Tea including the auction house and now in promotion of fine teas through her company, Kamelia Specialty Teas. She is passionate about tea and its promotion. Here she dispels some beliefs about drinking tea in summer.

Do you think drinking tea in summer has to be different to what we consume in winter?

Tea is one of the rare beverages which can be drunk hot in winters & iced/cold in summers. There is a saying by J Jonker, from 1670, which is as true today as it was then. He says:

“Tea that helps our head and heart.

Tea medicates most every part.

Tea rejuvenates the very old.

Tea warms the hands of those who're cold.

Tea cools the mind manifold.”

Only the recipe & style of preparation changes in summers but the basic of tea remains the same. You could combine it with other beverages. Tea doesn't have to go alone when you're searching for a great summer beverage. Flavour your tea with lemonade, pomegranate juice or a variety of other juices for a refreshing and healthy twist on regular tea.

You could even make a punch. Whether you choose to add alcohol or not is up to you, but tea can be a great addition to many summer-friendly punches. Mixed with fruit, juices and sparkling water, tea can bring a lot of life to the party.

Putting on a mask made from green

tea can alleviate sunburned skin in summers, but also can repair injured skin. People can use intense green tea water for cold compress, because fresh green tea is rich in tea polyphenols and can resist ultraviolet damage.

Green tea contains a lot of vitamin C, which has a good whitening effect, and the flavonoids in green tea can enhance the antioxidation of vitamin C, and thus reaching a better effect of whitening.

What about tea without milk - is it more advisable?

Most teas particularly aromatic leaf teas are best had without milk. Milk is quite overpowering & easily covers the other attributes of tea (but sometimes helps enhance the flavour of tea come thru cup easily in case of strong teas). Leaf teas like Darjeeling, high grown Nilgiris are best served without milk. Flavoured teas (except masala & cardamom for Indian palate) also go best either as hot black tea without milk or iced tea/mocktails. Imagine earl grey with milk – and you will realize how wrong that is!

However the CTC (granular tea-Assam) colour cups with liquor strength go best with milk because the tea is strong enough to render its character

thru the milk. Having tea with milk is a culture that has come from the British.

A small German study recently, however, found drinking black tea significantly improved the ability of arteries to relax and expand to keep blood pressure healthy.

But the European Heart Journal paper found proteins in milk, called caseins, blocked this effect. Though earlier studies said that milk does not interfere.

What other flavours can be used with tea?

I have recently developed quite a few new flavours though raspberry, vanilla, strawberry, peach, lemon etc. have been quite common. I modified Rose & Mint to suit palate better & have earned accolades!! Absolutely new ones designed by me are- Khus, Maristar (marigold & aniseed). I have received raving reviews. I am developing 'Rosemary'- a south Indian spice, & Kewada flower now.

I personally feel that tea best goes with floral flavours & spice flavours than fruity flavours. Fruity flavours are already recognised with ice creams & other cold drinks, whereas flowers are rarely used for flavouring, i.e hibiscus,

rose, marigold, lavender etc.

How long can tea decoction last if you make it in the morning?

If well refrigerated, I reckon it should last for 2 or more days (plain liquor). Though readymade iced teas have a longer shelf life.

How to make tea drinking healthier in summer?

Fruit punches as mentioned above make it more delicious for all ages.

Is tea a fashionable drink?

Coffee is trendy but Tea is Classic. Coffee is hip but Tea is heritage. Coffee is modern but Tea is a culture, a class, a style of life. A reason to meet! Tea is a symbol of hospitality across the globe! Tea has a history to tell like no other beverage. It has social & spiritual values attached to it. (In Buddhist monasteries tea is served to god during prayers.) "Fashion is seasonal & ephemeral. Tea is immortal!!"

How much tea can an individual drink in a day?

It is entirely upon one's taste but it looks that there is a small element of addiction here. Though tea is healthy, over drinking of tea can cause acidity.

What about decaffeinated tea - is it a better option for those who have a sleep problem?

Yes. But technically tea time gets over after 6/6.30 pm.

What is your association with tea and how long have you been associated with promoting tea in and out of India?

I was born in the estate in Darjeeling!! My first association, I played & grew up in the tea fields, my second association was after my education I have been serving the Tea industry since 1985 and my ever lasting association. I have been on the fields with my father & trained with him initially. Then I became a Tea taster & auctioneer & then launched Kamelia Specialty teas in 2004.

Often when we use ice in cold tea it just dilutes it too much - any suggestions?

There are two ways to combat that. You could add ice to a tea concentrate. Brew it in less water & then add ice at the time of serving. Alternatively, have it chilled like beer without adding ice.

Anything else that you believe you would like to convey about Tea?

How about I quote from a poem by Jummy Dean 'Tea for Three':

I thank God for His blessings And the mercies He's bestowed.

I'm drinkin' from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed!

Lord, help me not to gripe About tough rows I've hoed.

I'm drinkin' from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed!

May I never be too busy To help others bear their loads.

I'll keep drinkin' from my saucer, 'Cause my cup has overflowed!



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