

# Tea culture in china essay sample

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China is the homeland of the tea, it is the country that finds and utilizes tea first in the world. In China, the history of tea had more than three thousand years old. Over one thousand years ago, Chinese people began to have the habit of drinking tea. Now, tea is a part of Chinese people's life.

Seven most important things in daily life of Chinese people are expressed in a proverb often recited when people talk about their family budget. "Seven elements face you on opening the gate: firewood, rice, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar and tea." Tea is regarded as one of the top urgent matters in home live. Wang anshi (1021-1086), the famous political reformer and literate of Song Dynasty once said: "Tea is as indispensable in daily life as rice and salt."

Tea is always offered immediately to a guest in the Chinese home. Serving a cup of tea is more than a matter of mere politeness; it is a symbol of togetherness, a sharing of something enjoyable and a way of showing respect to visitors. To not take at least a sip might be considered rude in some areas. In previous time, if the host held his teacup and said, "please have tea", the guest will take his conge upon the suggestion to leave.

And now, just as coffee in the west, tea became a part of Chinese people's daily life. You can see many teahouses on streets like cafes in the west. Tea has such a close relationship with Chinese that in recent years, a new branch of culture related to tea is rising up in China, which has a pleasant name of "Tea Culture". It includes the art of making and drinking tea, and some customs about tea.

Tea History in China

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Tea had long history in China. It is believed that China has tea-shrubs as early as five to six thousand years ago, and human cultivation of tea plants dates back two thousand years. Tea from China, along with her silk and porcelain, began to be known the world over more than a thousand years ago. The history of tea in China can be divided in four periods.

#### Classical Period (Before 618 A. D.)

From legend, the first person to drink tea was a man named Shennong who was an herbal medicine scientist. One day, when he climbed a mountain to seek the herbs he felt thirsty and then he was feeling a leaf fell onto his foot. He picked this leaf up and twisted the leaf with his fingers. Then the juice of the leaf went out and he tasted the juice with his tongue. Because the taste of the juice was quite bitter so he thought that this leaf could have medicinal value and could help quench thirst. Thus, according to legend, Shennong was the first individual to drink tea.

From 350 to 600 A. D., the demand for tea dramatically increased and outstripped the supply of wild tea trees. Farmers began to grow tea plants in the Szechwan area, but soon tea cultivation had spread throughout China.

Tea during this time was made of leaves boiled in water with ginger, orange or other produce added to it. And tea was mostly consumed for medicinal purposes to treat digestive and nervous conditions.

#### Classical Period (618-907 A. D., Tang Dynasty)

During this time, tea drinking evolved into an art form. There was a man called “ Lu Yu” (Today Chinese people called him “ The father of tea”). He did a lot of researches about tea, and in 780 A. D he wrote a book called “ Cha Jing” (The art of tea-drinking), which was the first book about Chinese tea in the world.

This book epitomized tea as part of the Chinese culture. The three-volume book covered everything related to tea from the proper techniques to growing plants to brewing tea. There was even a detailed description of a formal tea ceremony utilizing 27 pieces of equipment. Due to the complexity and the great number of accessories needed for the tea ceremony, only the affluent connoisseurs could afford all the equipment and the servants needed to prepare the tea. The connoisseurs included scholars, officials, and members of the royal court who studied the teachings of Confucius. As a result, the culture of tea contained a poetic aura.

After the book issued, Drinking Tea became fashion in Chinese. Every one, no matter nobles, officials, workers, farmers, were fanatical about drinking tea. And the fashion gradually spread over Korea, Japan and the South East Asia.

Tea during this period was sold in a brick form. The leaves were steamed, crushed, fired, and crushed into a brick. Tea was made by breaking a piece from this brick and boiling it in water.

Romantic Period (690-1279 A. D., Song Dynasty)

During this period, every aspect of tea was further refined. Harvests became carefully regulated affairs. Before the harvest, sacrifices should send to mountain deities. After a specific day was chosen to harvest the leaves at their peak, the tea pickers picked leaves to the rhythm of a drum or cymbal. The tea pickers were usually young girls who had to keep their fingernails a certain length in order to pick the leaves without touching their skin. The freshly harvested leaves were sorted by grades with the best grades sent to the emperor as tribute. A cake of high-grade tea could be worth several pieces of gold while one of the highest grades would be priceless.

The art of making ceramic tea equipment was developed a great deal during this period. Tea bowls became deeper and wider. And the hue glazes, such as light green, black and deep blue were used on the bowls to enhance the tea's color. The most famous style of these bowls was a black bowl with lines running down the bowl called rabbit's fur.

During this time tearooms and houses were built in order to enjoy tea at a social and spiritual level. And tea was made by breaking a piece of tea brick and grinding it into a powder, then added to hot water.

#### Naturalistic Period (1368-1911 A. D., Ming & Qing Dynasties)

During this period, tea became a beverage to be enjoyed by everyone, rich and poor. Drink tea became a common custom in Chinese people's life. Tea during this time was made from loose leaves steeped in hot water. At that time the kind of tea was increased, the way of drink tea was abundant, and the technological of make tea was improved. Different methods to process

tea originated during this period, which as a result led to different types of tea, such as green, oolong, and black teas.

### The Classification of Chinese Tea

Although there are hundreds of varieties of Chinese tea, they can be mainly classified into five categories, that is, green tea, black tea, Oolong tea, scented tea, and compressed tea.

Green tea, as the oldest kind of tea, with its natural fragrance, is widely welcomed by different people. It is baked immediately after picking. So green tea keeps the original colour of the tealeaves without fermentation during processing. Green tea has amazing health benefits, relatively low caffeine content, and a mild flavor. According to the different ways of processing, it can be divided to many kinds. Among various green tea, Longjing (Dragon Well) Tea around the West Lake in Hangzhou, HuangshanMaofeng Tea from mountain Huangshan, and Yinzhen (Silver Needle) Tea from Moutain Junshan are most famous.

Black tea, known as “ red tea” in China, the color of tea water is red. Different from green tea, black tea is a kind of fermented tea. After the fermentation, its color changes from green to red. Black tea has a smoky aroma and an intense flavor. The most famous black teas in China are “ Qi Hong”(originated in Anhui), “ Dian Hong”(originated in Yunnan), and “ Ying Hong”(originated in Guangdong).

Oolong tea, with an excellent combination of the freshness of green tea and the fragrance of black tea, become popular with more and more

people. Because Oolong tea is defined as semi-fermented tea, there are many degrees of fermentation. Some oolong teas are lightly fermented, so they are called green oolongs. These teas are very fragrant. Black oolongs are heavily fermented and are known for their lasting aftertaste. It has a good function in helping body building and dieting. Fujian, Guangdong and Taiwan are the major producing areas of this kind of tea. Oolong tea grows on cliffs, the hard picking process make it become the most precious tea.

Scented tea, the tea with flower, incorporate flavor of tea and fragrance of flowers into an organic whole. The scented tea is very popular in Northern China. It was produced in Song dynasty originally. A famous scented tea in China is the jasmine tea, because many people like the fragrance of the jasmine. Scented tea mainly produces in Fujian, Zhejiang, AnHui and JiangXu province.

Compressed tea, this is a kind of tea, which is compressed and hardened into a certain shape. It is good for transport and storage and is mainly supplied to the ethnic minorities living in the border areas of the country. As compressed tea is black in colour in its commercial form, so it is also known in China as “black tea”. Most of the compressed tea is in the form of bricks; therefore, it is generally called “brick tea”. Brick tea is made from black tea or green tea and is pressed into blocks. This kind of tea is popular with minority people in border regions. The most famous one is “Pu’er Tea” made in Yunnan province.

In China, there are also many other kinds of tea. Among them white tea is special and is not very familiar to most people. Just as its name suggests,

this kind of tea is as white as silver. It is mainly produced in Zhenhe and Fuding in Fujian Province, but popular in Southeast Asia. Famous varieties include “ Silver Needle” and “ White Peony”.

### How to Select Excellent Tea

Aside from the variety, tea is classified into grades. Generally, appraisalment of tea is based on five principles, namely, shape of the leaf, color of the liquid, aroma, taste and appearance of the infused leaf.

Speaking of the shape of the leaf, there are flat, needle-like, flower-like, and so on. The judgment is usually made according to the artistic tastes of the tea tasters.

The evenness and transparency of the leaf will decide the color of the liquid. Excellent liquid should not contain rough burnt red leaves or red stems.

Aroma is the most important factor in judging the quality of a kind of tea. Putting 3 grams leaves into 100 milliliters boiled water, people can judge the quality of the tea by the smell from the liquid.

The judgment should be completed through the taste of the liquid and the appearance of the infused leaves.

### How to Store Tea

The good tea must be kept dry. The best container is a metal box with a double lid, or a glass bottle with a tight cover. Better yet, one that is lightproof. In a store, loose tea keeps better than that packed in tins or boxes



because it has a larger bulk. Some tea comes wrapped in tinfoil and boxed. If you expect to use it all in a month or two, it is all right to leave it in the original bag. But oolong tea can keep longer. If tea gets damp you can spread it out in a pan and dry it in the oven. Therefore, Store tea in a cool, dry place, preferably well ventilated. And another important thing is tea absorbs other odors easily, so never keep it in a closet with mothballs or other strong-smelling substances.

### Tea Ware

People like tea must also like teapot. The flavor is especially good of the tea made from small teapot. The culture of playing small teapot was begun in the 16th century (Ming Dynasty in China). Today Chinese people still like to use small teapot to make tea.

In China, people also think different teas prefer different tea wares. Green tea prefers glass tea ware; scented tea prefers porcelain ware while Oolong tea performs best in purple clay tea ware.

Moreover, tea wares not only improve tea quality but also by-produce a tea art. Skilled artisans bestow them artistic beauty. Therefore, the collections of high quality small teapot become a high-class culture in Chinese.

Tea wares consist of mainly teapots, cups, tea bowls and trays etc. Tea wares had been used for a long time in China. The unglazed earthenware, used in Yunnan and Sichuan provinces for baking tea today, reminds us the earliest utensils used in ancient China. Tea drinking became more popular in the Tang dynasty when tea wares made of metals were served for noblesse

and civilians commonly used porcelain ware and earthenware. In the Song dynasty tea bowls, like upturned bell, became common. They were glazed in black, dark-brown, gray, gray/white and white colors. Gray/white porcelain tea wares predominated in the Yuan dynasty and white glazed tea wares became popular in the Ming dynasty. Teapots made of porcelain and purple clay were very much in vogue during the middle of the Ming dynasty. Gilded multicolored porcelain produced in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province and the bodiless lacquer wares of Fujian Province emerged in the Qing dynasty.

The most famous Chinese teapot is called “ Purple sand teapot” which was developed from ceramics. The Purple sand teapot is made from the special potter clay (called “ Purple Gold Mud”), which is found in the South Yixing, Jiangsu Province. The clay contains lots of iron that is good for producing teapot. And the nature of the clay is very suitable for making tea.

Today, tea wares made of gold, silver, copper, purple clay, porcelain, glass, lacquer and other materials are available. Among various kinds of tea wares, porcelain wares made in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi Province and purple clay wares made in Yixing, Jiangsu Province occupied the top places.

How to Make a “ Nice Cup of Tea”— the Art of Chinese Tea

### Preparation

For make a nice cup of tea, firstly, you should get the tea things ready.

Collect clean teapot, tea pitcher, teacups, and loose tea. Boil water in a small kettle to the appropriate temperature. You should use fresh water. And the water should contain as less mineral as possible. And there are other things

can be used, such as: saucers, smelling cups, tea tray, tea strainer, and waste water container.

### Heat Equipment

Using the kettle, carefully fill the teapot with hot water. Replace the lid on the top of the teapot and pour hot water over the teapot. Fill all the cups (and smelling cups) with hot water. After everything is heated, dispose of the water in the teapot and cups.

### Add Tea

Put loose tealeaves into the warm teapot. As a general guideline, if the tealeaves are tightly rolled, the leaves should fill a quarter of the teapot. If the tealeaves are not tightly rolled, the leaves should fill up to one half of the teapot, don't more than half full, because you should leave room for tealeaves expand.

### Wash Tea

After the tealeaves have been added to the pot, you had better wash the tealeaves to make sure them clean. Just pour in a little boiling water and drain it off immediately.

### First infusion.

Pour hot water over the leaves until the desired level and cover. Then let the tea stand.

There are different adequate temperatures of water for different kinds of tea. For most of tea, the adequate temperature is almost 100°C. But for Green Tea, the adequate temperature should not over 90°C.

The best tea is made by infusing for a short time rather than steeping for a longer period, because the flavor come out early in the infusion. Three to five minutes is recommended. Very fine tea needs an extremely short time. Do not infuse any tea longer than five minutes, because the tea water will become bitter. And a short time also reduces the caffeine. Not just look at colour to measure when the tea is ready, because colour is not a good gauge of flavor. The colour comes out very quickly in black tea, but green tea should never get dark. So if you want strong tea, use more leaves, not more time.

#### First drink

Before pouring, stir the tea or shake the pot and then let the leaves settle. Pour into cups thought a tea strainer. Green tea is of course taken without anything in it. If milk and sugar are used with black tea, put the sugar in first, that can make it dissolve well. After pouring, strain off the tea left in the pot into another warmed kettle, do not let the tea with the leaves in longer to make it darker.

#### More infusion

In General, water can be poured for more than one time (usually 3 to 4 times) on the same tealeaves. Black and oolong teas can stand up through more infusions than green tea. And the tea should be drunk after more than

1 minute for the second and more times of water pouring. But never use tea that has stood overnight. Because it is not good for people's healthy.

### The Adequate Volumes of Tea to be drunk Everyday

People's habits, ages, health and living environments will affect the volume of tea drink everyday.

For an ordinary adult, the adequate volume is around 12 grams of tea everyday, which should be separated to 3 or 4 times to drink.

For people who have high workload, or have high energy consumed, or eat too much, they should drink around 20 grams of tea everyday.

People who always smoke, drink wine, or eat too much fatness/ oiliness food, should properly drink more tea.

Pregnant woman, child, people with neurasthenia, people with heart disease, etc. should drink low volume of light tea.

### Advantages of Tea-Drinking

Chinese people believed that a person who always drinks tea can has better health and longer life. And many modern researches prove that tea is a good natural health drink.

Chinese tea contains vitamin, essence, fluorine, etc. that are health for eyes, brains, kidney, etc.

Components of tea:

- 3. 5%-7% inorganic substances
- 93%-96. 5% organic substances
- 27 types of inorganic substances, included phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, magnesium, manganese, fluorine, aluminum, calcium, sodium, iron, copper, zinc, selenium, etc.
- major organic substances: protein, lipid, carbohydrate, amino acid, alkaloid, organic acid, pigment, vitamin, etc.
- 20%-30% leaf-protein, 3. 5% can be dissolved in water
- 1. 5%-4% free amino acid, up to 20 types
- 25%-30% carbohydrate, 3%-4% can be dissolved in water
- 4%-5% lipid

How teas are good for different kinds of people:

1. For peoples with weak bodies

Red tea is adequate for them. And adding some sugar and milk can let them increase energy and absorb more nutrients.

2. For teens

As they are in the growth period, green tea is adequate for them.

3. For ladies at the time before and after menstruation, or in climacteric

They are easy to become angry and bother. They should take flower tea, which is good for livers. It also can smooth their temper.

#### 4. For fat people

They should drink oolong tea or red tea (especially Pu-erh). It can lower the level of fat in human body.

#### 5. For people who need to have good analytical mind or energetic body

People like drivers, athletes, soldiers, analysts, etc. should take green tea. It is good for the mind, also can increase the intelligence and memory.

#### 6. For diabetic

The level of blood sugar in diabetic's body is inadequately higher than standard level. The diabetics always feel thirsty and weak. Researches prove that drinking tea can lower the blood sugar level. It can also letdown thirsty, increase physical strength. Diabetics should drink green tea. And the volume drunk everyday can be a little bit higher. It is suggested that they eat some pumpkin when drinking tea.

#### 7. For people with heart disease

People with too quick heartbeat, or whose heart/kidney are not well functioning, should take some light tea. Moreover, the volume taken shouldn't be too high.

People with too slow heartbeat or high blood pressure, should always drink high-class green Tea. It can accelerate the blood circulation; lower the level of cholesterol and blood coagulation, etc.

#### 8. For people with stomach disease

People with gastritis, gastric ulcer, and stomach hemorrhage, should drink some light tea, sugar red tea or milk red tea at 2 hours after taking medicine. It can help to eliminate inflammation and protect the gastric mucous membrane.

#### 9. For pregnant women and child

They should drink light tea. It provide mineral nutrients like potassium, zinc for them. In additions, child drink tea would have better digestion.