TEAS

Black Tea, Orange Pekoe, Green Tea – these are all the standard teas around the world. And they are loaded with antioxidants and make a great drink with a lot less caffeine than coffee. Tea is made by steeping the tea leaves in very hot water.

Buy these teas in loose form, without the little bags or sachets that are so handy to use. Tea bags are made from plastic materials like nylon and propropylene, that can release billions of microplastics into your tea as it steeps.

You can get loose tea on line, or at the Bulk Barn or Specialty Tea Shops and use little stainless tea balls to steep or use a coffee filter system, using the tea leaves instead of the coffee grounds. Here is an excerpt from the internet:

> *It all started with a 2019 Canadian study at McGill University published in the Environmental Science & Technology Journal, which stated that steeping a plastic tea bag at a brewing temperature of 95°C releases around 11.6 billion microplastics and 3.1 billion nanoplastics into a single cup. Microplastics are tiny pieces of plastic between 100 nanometres and 5 millimeters in size. Compared to salt, for example, which has been also found to contain microplastics, each cup contains thousands of times the greater mass of plastic, at 16 micrograms per cup.*

Herbal teas. Most of the teas found in stores are in convenient little bags, think microplastics, and also many of the herbs have been treated with chemicals, so be wary. Instead, buy loose herbs such as peppermint, spearmint, hibiscus, lemon balm etc. and steep your own tea, or grow your own herbs and dry them or freeze them for future use.

Green teas don't give the same jittery feeling or crash as you do with coffee because of the l-theanine content in green teas. L-theanine can slow he absorption of caffeine and provide longer lasting energy throughout the day. L-theanine can also influence Alpha brainwave activity (same brainwave stimulated during long periods of meditation, possibly why the original consumers of green tea were the monks). The longer the green tea is grown int he shade, the higher the L-theanine content.

Matcha tea is a more powerful healing agent than regular green tea. Like green tea it comes from the Camelllia sinensis plant, but it is grown in the shade to increase its chlorophyll content which gives the plant a darker green colour and boosts the amino acid content. The stems and veins are removed, it is steamed and dried without being rolled and then ground into a fine powder. So you are actually consuming the whole leaf, not just the residue after steeping the leaves.

Matcha contains about half the caffeine of coffee. It is rich in catechins, and has the antioxidants of green tea but when the powder is dissolved in water, it produces three times more . Antioxidants help stabilize harmful free radicals that can damage our cells and cause chronic disease. The L Theanine produced by shade growing Matcha helps to calm the brain while keeping you alert.

Studies with matcha have revealed there is an enhancing effect on cognitive function, cardio-metabolic health, and anti-tumorogenesis. To date, randomized clinical trials (RCT) showed that matcha decreases stress, slightly enhances attention and memory, but has no effect on mood.

Dr. William Li (see on youtube), tells us matcha is a super-enriched polyphenol tea. He says the super polyphenols found in matcha have also been found in the lab to kill breast cancer stem cells. He tells us that 2 grams once a day of matcha powder dissolved in water was given in a study for 12 weeks and results were improvement in cognitive function, better sleep quality (helps the glimphatic system of the brain drain toxins when sleeping).

Gyokuro tea is one of the most sought after teas in Japan. It is famous for its unique sweet and savory flavour which is obtained through a long careful production process. They are cut off from sunlight 3 weeks before harvesting which prevents its theanine from becoming bitter. The longer it is shaded, the smoother and sweeter. Then the top leaves are selected because they are the sweetest and highest in nutrients. Then they are steamed, rolled and dried. The leaves then look like little pine needles. The long shading process increases the caffeine content (the tea produces caffeine to protect itself against insects and by shading the plants, it stresses them more, making them more vulnerable so they naturally protect themselves). Theanine is an amino acid that can induce a calming effect on our brain and the longer the plant is in the shade, the higher the theanine content.

Sencha tea is cultivated in full sunlight, high in catechins. It can be sold as a loose tea leaf, or it can also ground into a fine powder (benefit is that you are consuming the entire leaf). Not all senchas are shaded prior to harvesting. Sometimes it is shaded for one week (Gyuokuro is shaded for 3 weeks). It is similar to Gyokuro in that the top 3 leaves are selected but it can be steamed for a longer time which breaks down the tea leaves, allowing more of it to flow into your cup of tea. The caffeine content is different than Gyokuro. Gyokuro contains 120-140mg caffeine per cup; sencha contains half of that. Sencha is often used as a weight loss tool, drinking it before exercising which enhanced fat oxidation. The high amount of catechins of sencha is used to prevent colds and flus. Fukamushi sencha green tea is noted as the best loved sencha tea available.

Oolong Tea This has its own category of tea. Black tea is allowed to fully oxidize during processing, giving the tea leaves their dark color and rich malty aroma they're known for. Green tea is barely oxidized at all, so the leaves keep some of their original green leaf color and fresh-picked flavor. Oolong tea falls somewhere in between and is often described as a partially oxidized tea. But oxidation levels in oolong can vary from 8% to 80% depending on the production style of the tea master. Which is why the flavor profile of some oolongs may lean more toward a fresh green tea (less oxidized) and others toward a malty black tea (more oxidized). The biggest difference between oolong tea and black or green teas? Oxidation and shape. Its caffeine content is somewhere between black and green tea. Oolong teas are traditionally rolled, twisted or curled into tight balls or thin strands. These artisanal shaping techniques depend on the traditions

of the tea master making the tea. Rolling is an important aspect of oolong processing that alters the appearance, color and aroma of the final tea leaves. Depending on how and when the leaves are rolled during processing, the tea master can subtly alter the entire direction of the tea's final flavor.

Genmai tea (brown rice tea) is a Japanese green tea combined with roasted popped brown rice. It is sometimes referred to colloquially as "popcorn tea" because a few grains of the rice pop during the roasting process and resemble popcorn, or as "people's tea", as the rice served as a filler and reduced the price of the tea, making it historically more available for poorer Japanese. Today everyone drinks it. Genmaicha is genmai tea mixed with matcha tea, giving a stronger flavour.