

PART **IV**

Appendices

A

Making a Good Cup of Tea

I'm not a connoisseur.
I actually drink the stuff.

— Me

A.1 Basics of Making Tea

Most of the world knows how to make tea, but there is at least one major industrialized nation in which the preparation of a decent cup of tea is a lost art. These are very basic guidelines for the uninitiated, covering black tea in particular.

- Use loose tea; avoid teabags. Your best bet is to find a good tea shop with knowledgeable staff. If you live in the US, you may have to look online.
- Use a good teapot. A mostly-spherical ceramic pot is a good place to start. Make sure that the lid won't fall out when you pour.
- Warm the teapot by filling it with hot water.
- Bring fresh aerated water to a full boil. Just before it reaches boiling, empty your teapot and put in the tea.
- As soon as the water boils, pour it into the teapot. Cover the teapot with a towel or tea cozy.
- Let the pot sit quietly for about four minutes.
- Pour the tea from the pot through a strainer into your cup.

You will want to experiment with this a few times to find out how much tea to use, whether or not you like milk in your tea, and how much sugar (if any) you like. If you use milk, add it to the cup before you pour the tea. For a typical American mug, use approximately one glorp of milk, which is just a bit more than a full slosh. A glorp should more than cover the bottom of the mug and turn the tea a pleasant, warming, light brown color.

Never use cream in tea. Use whole milk, preferably at room temperature. The term “Cream Tea” refers to tea served with scones, jam, and whipped (or, preferably, Devonshire Clotted) cream. The cream and jam go onto the scones, not into the tea.

When putting tea into the teapot, forget everything you ever learned about coffee. The rule of thumb for tea is “one teaspoonful of tea for every cup plus one for the pot.” Note, however, that the name “teaspoon” really does have meaning. If you use too much tea, the result will be heavy and bitter. Too little tea and you will have what Jonathan Swift described as “water bewitched.”



Email

From: Matthew Geddes, Xavier College, South Australia
To: tng-technical@lists.dcerpc.org

I was just reading Appendix A and thought it might be worth mentioning that tea should only be drunk from white cups. For some reason, it don't taste right out of coffee cups (well, non-white ones anyway). And china also appears to make the tea taste better.

A.2 About Tea

A neighbor of mine lived in India for a while, and told me that he had once toured a tea packing plant. He said that the best tea was sold to places like Australia, Russia, and the Middle East which have long had access to the very best quality tea. The middle quality tea was either kept for local consumption, or sold to Western Europe. The bottom quality tea was sent to the United States. This means that Americans need to do some looking if they want to find good tea.

Tea can be green, Oolong, or black, depending upon the degree of fermentation. A green tea is unfermented and will have the least caffeine, Oolong tea is partially fermented, and black tea is fully fermented.

The terms Assam, Ceylon, Darjeeling, and Yunnan all refer to the region in which the tea is grown. Each has its own characteristics. There are also special words describing which leaf of the tea shoot was picked and how the leaves were processed. Earl Grey tea is actually a blended black tea with a special flavoring added, and note that the term “Orange Pekoe” refers to the size of the processed tea leaves, not the variety of tea. A box labeled Orange Pekoe is typically a box of unspecified tea, probably packed into teabags.

**Email**

From: Olaf Barthel
To: Chris Hertel

...Incidentally, "pekoe" reportedly is chinese for "white down" and refers to the young tender tea leaves. It doesn't have to be bad tea, although it's often hard to tell what the heck "orange pekoe" is supposed to be.

Tea is not really tea unless it is made from the leaves of a specific plant, *Camellia sinensis*. There are several products called “herbal tea” that are not tea at all, but fall instead into the category of “herbal infusion.”

A.3 Nasty Habits

The teabags sold in UK supermarkets tend to make stronger tea than their rather frightening American counterparts. If you can get hold of some British teabags, you can make tea the way they do at London train stations. We call this British Rail tea.

When you order a cup of tea at a London train station they dump milk, sugar, teabag, and boiling water into the cup at the same time and then hand it to you. This makes for a uniquely generic flavor that is just right for an early morning zombie commute. You can achieve similar results on a larger scale by

using a full-sized insulated carafe instead of a cup. This should last you all morning, and keep you “going” all afternoon.¹

A.4 Decaffeinating Tea

You can decaffeinate tea at home by following these steps:

- Add a little extra tea to the pot. (This process will rob a little flavor from the tea. Adding more tea helps compensate.)
- When the water boils, pour it on and wait about twenty to thirty seconds.
- Pour the water out through a strainer, returning any captured leaves to the pot.
- Pour on freshly boiled water, and steep as usual.

This process will remove about eighty percent of the caffeine, which dissolves very quickly in water.

Author’s note: I am not British. I live in Minnesota where hot drinks are required for winter survival. I did live in the UK for a year, many years ago. Being a foreigner I had to “try harder” in order to fit in — so I learned. Several years later someone accused me of being a “tea expert.” I am no such thing. In fact, I know very little about tea. Unfortunately, the tiny amount of knowledge I do have seems to be more than most American restaurant and café employees can claim on the subject.

1. Caffeine is a diuretic. Tea generally has less caffeine than coffee, but if you drink an entire carafe’s worth of either over the course of a morning you will need to visit the facilities.