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## TEA TIME

TEAtime....no I am not talking about golf, but the worlds' number one favorite drink, after water. Consumption has soared in recent years as consumers reach for alternatives to soda.

Tea has been around for thousands of years, but there have never been such a variety of teas available as there are today. All tea comes from the *Camellia Sinensis* plant. The differences come from how the tea is processed. Black tea, popular in the US, is exposed to air, which turns the leaves dark and imparts flavor. Green tea is not processed as much, where the leaves are heated or steamed quickly and thus less flavorful.

One of the first things I noticed when I moved to Maryland is a different definition for tea. When at a restaurant or friends house and I asked for tea, I received a tea bag and cup of hot water. For a Southern girl, tea is cold, freshly brewed and sweet, made with lots of sugar! We call it sweet tea in the South and now the whole country has discovered how great it tastes. They sell it by gallons in the supermarket, in cans at the convenience store, and even fast food restaurants have it on the menu.

I prefer to make my own tea. For the cost of one gallon of ready to drink tea, you can buy an entire box of tea bags that makes 12 gallons. Moreover, home brewed has 75% more potassium (88mg) and you get to decide how much sweetener to add if any. For instance, two teaspoons of sugar will sweeten one cup of tea for only 30 calories. One cup of a popular tea sold in the can has 90 calories, three times as much. Substitute an artificial sweetener and it will have zero calories.

To brew tea start with fresh cold water by running your tap water for 30 seconds before filling the teakettle. For black tea heat water to a rolling boil, pour over tea bags and steep for two minutes. Sweeten and pour over ice. Green and white teas require less heat to steep so bring the water just to the point where tiny bubbles begin to form. A quicker method is to buy cold brew tea bags, which eliminates the task of heating the water. Several companies produce an iced tea maker that even my husband can manage to operate.

Remember, tea is a source of caffeine, but most people can have up to 300 to 400 mg of caffeine daily without any side effects. The amount of caffeine varies by the type of tea with black tea being the highest, ranging from 64 to 112 mg per 8 fluid ounce serving. Oolong tea contains less about 29 to 53 mg per serving. Green and white teas contain the least caffeine 32 to 37 mg per serving. If caffeine is a concern, drink decaffeinated tea or be moderate in your consumption of regular tea

The use of tea for medicinal purposes can be traced back more than a thousand years. We still drink tea today for its health benefits, and science increasingly is supporting tea's medicinal claims. The National Institute of

Health has a fact sheet which explains the potential benefits of tea at <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/diet/tea-fact-sheet> While research is inconclusive I vote for having an afternoon tea break and propose you plan an old fashion tea party!

Frederick has some excellent tea shops to discover your favorite tea flavors – Shab Row Tea Emporium, Voila! in Frederick ~ Special Teas & Other Goodness, The Spice & Tea Exchange of Frederick, and Baltimore Coffee and Tea Company.

Interest in herbal teas has risen but there is not enough research to claim health benefits. The truth is many herbal teas are simply tea leaves with added herbs, fruit juice, honey, sweeteners or other flavor extracts. Some are not tea at all but infusions of herbs, flowers, roots, spices or various other parts of plants. Consumers should be cautious about making their own herbal teas. Herbs like comfrey, lobelia, woodruff, tonka beans, melilot, sassafras root and many others can be harmful in large amounts, potentially causing liver damage, bleeding, breathing problems or allergic reactions.

Consider using tea as a liquid substitute in recipes and to add potassium and antioxidants. Use in marinades, glazes, as a base for sauces like barbeque or sweet and sour, and as a braising liquid for cooking. While you are in the kitchen enjoy a nice refreshing glass of our tea recipes.

### ***GINGERED PINEAPPLE TEA***

4 cups water  
2 slices (1/4-inch) gingerroot  
3 tablespoons honey  
4 tea bags  
3 cups ice water  
1 can (12 oz.) frozen concentrated pineapple juice  
1 bottle (2 liter) lemon-lime carbonated beverage

Combine water, gingerroot, and honey in a 2-quart glass mix 'n pour bowl. Microwave on HIGH, uncovered, 8 to 9 minutes or until just about boiling. Add tea bags. Let stand 5 minutes. Squeeze tea bags, remove. Add ice water and juice concentrate. Let stand to melt ice; stir, remove ginger. Refrigerate until chilled\*. To serve, place several ice cubes in each glass. Fill half with tea mixture; finish filling with carbonated beverage. Makes about 1 gallon (16 cups) (Per 1 cup: 100 calories, 25g carbohydrate, 4mg sodium). TIPS: \*For longer storage, fill ice cube trays with mixture. Once frozen, empty into large plastic storage bag. To serve, place about 6 cubes in each glass; fill with carbonated beverage. If you don't want the caffeine, use a caffeine-free tea or omit tea. Diet beverage can be used. Honey can be omitted; add 2 tablespoons non-nutritive sweetener to tea after cooling. Garnish glasses with a wedge of fresh pineapple and a sprig of mint.

### ***MINTED CITRUS TEA MIX*** (Makes 1 1/4 cups)

1/2 pound orange Pekoe tea  
2 tablespoons dried mint leaves  
1 tablespoon dried lemon peel  
2 tablespoons whole cloves

Combine the ingredients in a medium bowl. Stir to blend. Pack the tea into an airtight canister or container. Delicious cold or hot.

**To make one cup of tea:**

1 teaspoon Tea Mix                      6 ounces boiling water

Fill a tea strainer with the Minted Citrus Tea Mix. Lay the strainer in the bottom of a teacup. Add the boiling water. Allow to steep for 5 minutes.

**ORANGE-NUTMEG TEA**

1 cup unsweetened powdered instant tea  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1 package (0.15 ounces) unsweetened orange-flavored soft drink mix  
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg

In a small bowl, combine all ingredients; stir until well blended. Store in an airtight container.

To serve: Stir 2 tablespoons tea mix into 6 ounces hot or cold water.

**RUBY SPICED MINT TEA**

4 1/2 cups water  
1 cup loosely packed fresh mint leaves  
3 tablespoons sugar  
3 whole cloves  
1 (3-inch) cinnamon stick  
6 cranberry-flavored tea bags

Combine first 5 ingredients in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil; cover, remove from heat, and let cool to room temperature. Add tea bags. Bring to a boil; cover, remove from heat, and let cool to room temperature. Remove and discard tea bags. Strain and serve over ice. Makes 4 (1-cup) servings (43 calories, 0.2 grams of fat).

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