

Keep It Cool

Tips for brewing green tea

By Dan Bolton
Editor

Preparing tea is not that complicated, but it requires attention to detail. In general blacks can take a bruising but preparing greens takes precision and control.

When tea is picked, the leaves and buds are green, alive with goodness and full of oily juices that contain complex aromatic and water-soluble compounds such as catechins, which have a bitter flavor, and theaflavins, which are sweet, add balance and decrease astringency.

Done correctly, drying enhances and traps desirable flavors within the leaves which are rolled to protect their shape. Tea can be dried using steam (Japanese style), tossed by hand in hot iron pans (Chinese style), left to wither slowly in the sun, cooked in wood-fired, coal- or gas-heated furnaces and even UV withered and micro-waved in industrial sized ovens.

Greens should be steeped only a short time (under four minutes) in good quality water at low temperatures. Steep Japanese style (steamed) green teas in 160- to 180-degree water. Chinese style (baked) greens are best when steeped between 180- and 185-degrees. Decant immediately. Loose leaf tea can be infused multiple times by increasing the steep time by one minute for up to four infusions. Do not increase temperature.

Scorching greens is so common many people think green tea is bitter by nature. It is sweet. That is why it is so important to extract only the flavorful components.

When held against a light the green tea liquor should appear bright and clear and uniformly translucent, its character and bouquet evident.

You'll know you succeeded with that first sweet taste. ☕

