



Kentucky Kitchens: Tea Time

Tea Teaser ...

You probably know that fruits and vegetables are chock-full of antioxidants. But did you know that brewed hot and iced tea contain antioxidants, too?

Other than

water, tea is the most commonly consumed beverage in the world.

Tea is a natural plant food, and all varieties of tea, except herbal tea, come from the *Camellia sinensis* plant.

Once the leaves are harvested, processing turns them into one of the three basic types of tea: black, green, or oolong.

BENEFITS OF TEA CONSUMPTION



The benefits of consuming tea include its protective role against certain types of cancer (oral, digestive, lung, and colorectal), stroke, and heart disease.

One study concluded that drinking tea reduces the risk of atherosclerosis, especially in women. In this study, drinking black tea was associated with more than a 50 percent reduction in risk among women who drank one-two cups daily. The lowest risk was seen in those consuming more than five cups of black tea daily.

ANTIOXIDANTS

Antioxidants help protect the body from harmful free radicals, which can lead to chronic diseases. Antioxidant compounds work like fire extinguishers in the body by quenching the fire of free radicals before they damage cells. Essentially, antioxidants protect the body from the potentially harmful effects of free radicals. The type of antioxidants found in tea are called **flavonoids**.

FLAVONOIDS

The amounts and types of flavonoids found in

tea depend on the variety of tea, manufacturing process, and brewing conditions. What is important to remember is that emerging research indicates the flavonoids in green, black, and oolong tea have comparable antioxidant activity. Some studies suggest that tea is more antioxidant-rich than many fruits and vegetables.

- ☛ **Flavonoids** ~ The correct term for the compounds found in all types of tea that have antioxidant effects. They act similar to aspirin, in that they stop blood platelets from forming blood clots.
- ☛ **Tannins** ~ Is a more general term for these compounds.
- ☛ **Polyphenols** ~ Also a more general term that refers to the structure of the antioxidant compounds in tea and other foods.
- ☛ **Catechins** ~ A certain flavonoid found in tea. They appear to be effective against a broad spectrum of cancers, including skin cancer.

TEA CHOICES

Traditional tea is the dried top leaves from the new growth of the *Camellia sinensis* plant, an evergreen shrub in the *Camellia* family. The type of tea, whether black, oolong, or green, depends on the processing.



Black tea is made from dried tea leaves that have been fermented. Black tea has a great intensity of flavor.

Oolong tea is briefly fermented so that it has a lighter, fruitier flavor. Oolong tea also has a lower caffeine content than black tea.

Green tea is fermented and steamed to destroy enzymes before it is dried.



MORE TEA TEASERS

Q: Do herbal teas contain antioxidants?

A: They are not true teas, as they are not made from the *Camellia*

sinesis plant, so they do not have the antioxidants that come from this plant.

Q: Does tea contain more caffeine than coffee?

A: No. Tea contains about half the caffeine found in coffee—40mg vs. 80-100mg per serving. Some beverage products may have added caffeine.

Q: Does decaffeinated tea have the same amount of antioxidants found in regular black tea?

A: Many decaffeinated teas have a high antioxidant content due to the starting blend.

Q: Is green tea better than black tea?

A: Research suggests both black and green teas have similar potential health benefits, and both contain flavonoids. Green, black, and oolong teas have equivalent antioxidant activity.

Q: If I make iced tea from tea bags, will I get the same antioxidant levels?

A: Yes. The levels of antioxidants in brewed tea remain the same whether it is consumed hot or iced.

Q: If I brew tea longer than 5 minutes, will I get more antioxidants?

A: You get only a small increase in antioxidants, but may increase bitter flavors.

MORE BENEFITS

✓ Population studies reveal that there is less incidence of cancer in countries where people drink green tea every day. This association appears strongest for gastrointestinal cancer, lung cancer, and breast cancer.

✓ A study in China revealed that tea drinkers had about 60 percent less cancer of the esophagus.

✓ More than 35,000 women in Iowa who drank at least two cups of tea daily had 60 percent less kidney and bladder cancer and 32 percent less cancer of the esophagus and colon.

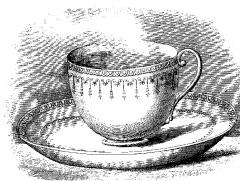
THERE ARE PRECAUTIONS

Limit your tea intake if you have a sensitive stomach, cardiovascular complications, kidney disorder, overactive thyroid, or tendency to spasm. Those prone to anxiety attacks or who are pregnant may need to limit their caffeine intake.

Drinking tea can be one of the best habits you can adopt. Enjoyed for nearly 5,000 years, tea not only has a delicious taste but its potential benefits make this drink even more satisfying.

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