

Going for the Green Stuff!!

Green Tea has long been valued in China for its medicinal properties useful in the maintenance of good health. It has been said in China "it is better to drink Green Tea than take medicine".

The Japanese custom of drinking green tea came from China about 800 AD. The use of tea started when Buddhist monks, who had gone to China for study, returned to Japan bringing tea with them as a medicinal beverage.

The consumption of Green Tea (*camellia sinensis*) has long been a staple in Oriental cultures. Recently, people in the west have started to follow suit largely due to the health improvement claims being made with regards to drinking green tea. In addition to the wide variety of green teas available, there are many flavoured green teas, supplements and health care products coming onto the market.

Health Benefits of Drinking Green Tea

Take a look at this long list of health benefits that have been associated with drinking green tea.

- Helps with Weight Loss
- Lowers Total Cholesterol Levels
- Improves Skin Health
- Increases Your Energy Levels
- Delays the onset of Parkinson's disease
- Improves overall immunity levels and lessens your chances of getting a cold, throat infection or flu
- May prevent and reduce the severity of Arthritis
- Provides therapeutic benefits to patients at risk for heart attacks or strokes
- Prevents or slows the progression of Diabetes
- May prevent the occurrence of some forms of cancer
- Slows down the onset of osteoporosis
- Destroys plaque forming bacteria in your mouth and prevents tooth decay
- May delay Alzheimer's
- Provides a natural remedy for stomach upset



For years doctors have suspected that green tea possesses remarkable healing properties. The Japanese and Chinese have been drinking it for centuries and their cancer rate is among the lowest in the world. Decades of study have shown that even moderate amounts of the "wonder substance" can prevent disease and actually lengthen life.

Next time you're opting for that morning cup of whatever, go for the green. Now that you know all the health benefits to be found in one little tea bag.

Thinking outside the cup

The benefits of cooking with tea seem almost as innumerable as drinking it. In many cases, when cooking with tea, it retains many of the essential vitamins and antioxidants as well as the HDL's (good cholesterols).

Tea, it seems, is not only a refreshing, delicious and healthy beverage, but also one of the most versatile and interesting ingredients that is Culinary scene. I recommend that you consider using your favourite teas in your culinary exploration. You are limited only by your imagination in this journey for the search of new ways to take your tea.

Tea as a spice:

Simply grind tea leaves in a pepper mill and combine with white pepper. This makes an unbelievably delicious rub, perfect for a steak. The tea adds a wonderfully fresh Asian-cuisine nuance to this otherwise ordinary meal.

Tea as a marinade:

Wondering what to do with that extra Earl Grey tea left in the teapot at the end of teatime? Don't dump it... Use it! Try adding it to your favorite marinade for chicken breasts for an out-of-this-world addition that will be sure to have your guests wondering the source of the mysterious (yet familiar) flavor. As a vegetarian digression, tea marinated tofu is a wonderful substitution in this dish.

Tea as a tenderizer:

Among tea's many benefits and effects, it is an efficient tenderizer. Want to get that falls-off-the-bone, melts-in-your-mouth effect for that dish that is great, but could be even better? Try adding some tea! Not to be camellia-exclusive, Rooibos "Red" tea has been shown to have similar results and may add yet another unique nuance for your culinary delights.

Tea as an aromatic:

Tea is the perfect complement to many flavours, filled with rich and subtle aromas. Adding a touch of Jasmine tea to a rice dish will add many different interesting levels of smell and flavor that are sure to intrigue and impress.

Tea as a dessert:

It is a fairly common practice to take tea after a meal. But what if tea was the dessert? This trend is quickly building in popularity in the food industry and is revolutionizing the way we think about our after-dinner sweets. How about a double whammy - A Green Tea Sorbet? Because many teas take sugar well, it is sensible to conclude that many sweets would take tea well. Many bakers and chocolatiers are adapting and adding new recipes to include the wonderful hints that tea can add.

With the warm weather approaching, treat your family and friends to some exotic Green tea variations to tickle their taste buds!!

Nutty Green Tea

Powdered almonds make this beverage beautifully nutty, and you can really taste the cinnamon and cardamom as well. If you don't have real saffron you can always leave that out.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tsp loose green tea
- 4 cardamom pods, bruised
- 1 small cinnamon stick, broken up
- Saffron threads, a pinch
- 4 cups water
- 2 tbs finely powdered almonds/almond flakes
- Honey, to taste
- 2 cups of Carbonated lime soda or Lemon Sprite (optional)

PREPARATION:

Mix everything except honey and almonds in a saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and let tea steep for 5 minutes. Put a teaspoon of almonds in the bottom of each cup, and pour hot tea over. Alternatively you could cool the tea mixture after having added the hot tea mixture to the almonds. Just before serving add 2 cups of Lemon Sprite to the mixture to add that zing!! and serve with various shaped ice cubes!!

Ginger Green Tea

A strong iced tea, made with fresh ginger. If you're looking for a change from the usual lemon iced tea, then you should give this bold ginger iced tea a try.

INGREDIENTS:

- 5 Green tea bags
- 1-inch piece of fresh ginger
- Honey to taste

PREPARATION:

Slice ginger root into thin slices and crush. Heat 1 quart of water and let tea bag steep with the ginger. Let steep over low heat for at least 10 minutes. Strain out tea and ginger slices and add honey. Let cool and serve over ice.

Green Tea Sorbet

3 cup water

2 1/2 tablespoons fine-quality green tea leaves

3/4 cup, plus 2 tablespoons sugar/honey

In a small saucepan bring water to a boil. Add tea leaves and remove pan from heat. Cover pan and steep tea 5 minutes. Add sugar (if using honey add at the end) stirring until dissolved, and strain tea through a fine sieve into a bowl. Chill tea, covered, until cold and nearly frozen. Just before serving crush it all up in a blender on the "Ice crusher" setting and add a few drops of lime juice. Serve with slices of lime wedged on the side of the sorbet glasses.



Green tea fruit punch

Crushed Ice

15 whole mint leaves

4 cups pre-made sweetened iced tea

1 splash lime juice

Lime wedges or wheels, for garnish

4 cups of mixed fruits finely chopped

To a cocktail shaker, add ice and mint leaves. Close shaker and shake a few times to bruise mint leaves. Add remaining ingredients and shake to combine.

Place chopped fruit and crushed ice into chilled glasses and pour chilled tea and garnish with lime wedge or wheel.



Green tea cheesecake with strawberries

Ingredients

Cake

1 cup (generous) ground shortbread cookies (about 6 ounces)
2 8-ounce packages cream cheese, room temperature (do not use whipped or "light" products)
1/2 cup (packed) fromage frais
3/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons sugar
4 large eggs
2 teaspoons Japanese green tea powder or 2 teaspoons finely ground green tea from about 4 tea bags

Tisane

2 1/2-pint containers fresh strawberries
1 bunch fresh mint
Boiling water

Preparation

For cake:

Preheat oven to 325°F. Press cookie crumbs firmly onto bottom (not sides) of 8-inch-diameter spring form pan. Wrap outside of pan tightly with 3 layers of heavy-duty foil. Using electric mixer, beat cream cheese, fromage frais, and sugar in large bowl until smooth. Add eggs 1 at a time, beating until incorporated after each addition. Beat in green tea powder until smooth. Pour batter over prepared crust in pan. Place cake in roasting pan; add enough hot water to roasting pan to come halfway up sides of spring form pan.

Bake cake until set but center moves very slightly when pan is gently shaken, about 1 hour. Remove cake from roasting pan; cool 1 hour at room temperature. Refrigerate uncovered overnight. (Can be prepared 2 days ahead. Cover and keep refrigerated.)

Cut around pan sides to loosen cake; remove sides. Place cake on platter. Garnish cake with some strawberries. Cut cake into wedges. Serve each piece with a few strawberries and a glass of tisane.

Strawberry-Mint Tisane

Place 5 crushed strawberries and 3 mint leaves in each of 8 heatproof glasses. Fill glasses with boiling water; let steep 5 minutes. Serve hot or chilled!!

Now park out on the pool side with a good book and these goodies and get that feel good factor totally on your own!! Mmmmmm sheer luxury!!