

Camellia sinensis, better known as the tea plant is the common factor among all the types of tea. Black tea, green tea, white tea, oolong and pu erh all start with the *Camellia sinensis* plant. Other infusions made from other plants such as rooibos, chamomile or honeybush, are not, correctly speaking, tea. We call them herbal infusions or tisanes. So, disregarding the tisanes, let's demystify the five major classes of tea: Black, green, white, oolong and pu erh.

Black tea is probably the most familiar of the five classes of tea and is the result of allowing the harvested tea leaves to completely oxidize before drying. Oxidization, in terms of tea, is the process of allowing the leaves to wilt as the chlorophyll within them breaks down and tannins are released. This oxidation process, known in the industry as fermentation, can take between two weeks to a month after which time, the tea is dried using some form of heat.

Green tea is tea which has not been allowed to oxidize. One to two days after it has been harvested, the oxidation process is halted by the application of heat – either steam heat, or by dry cooking in hot pans.

Similarly, **White tea** is made primarily from new growth buds which have not been allowed to oxidize at all. White tea leaves are frequently shaded from sunlight to prevent the formation of chlorophyll. Due to its delicate nature, white tea is produced in smaller

quantities and frequently commands a higher price.

Oolongs are teas that have been allowed to oxidize to a point somewhere between the green and black teas, generally two to three days. Oolong tea produces a cup that is, not surprisingly, something like a mix between black and green tea.

Lastly, **Pu-ehr** (“poo-air”), is tea that has had the oxidation process stopped and re-started. More specifically, it is tea that has been processed as green tea, then in a process similar to composting, the tea is piled, dampened and turned in precisely controlled conditions to give the pu ehr its final “ripening”. This process can take anywhere from six months to a full year to complete after which the tea can be aged like wine to produce a very mellow, earthy cup. It is possible to find pu erh teas 10 to 50 years old and even older, for which connoisseurs and speculators have been known to pay several thousands of dollars per cake.



Did you know?

Tea is actually one of the most affordable luxuries you can find. A tea that costs \$100 per pound actually only costs about 50-cents a cup. Compare that to soda and other beverages.

How to brew a perfect cup of tea:

Factors that affect a prepared tea beverage:

- The quality of the tea
- The quality of the water
- Correct measurement (*one teaspoon per 8 oz. cup*)
- Correct steeping temperature
- Correct steeping time (*over steeping releases tannins which gives your tea a bitter taste*)
- Allowing the tea leaf to expand fully (*give the leaf room to expand*)
- Separating the leaf from the liquid at the end of the steeping process. You must stop the steeping process (*see note about over-steeping above*)

Black teas: steep 4-6 minutes in boiling (212° F) water. Darjeelings are the exception, and should be steeped 2-3 minutes.

Oolong teas: should steep at temperatures just under the boiling point (190°-204° F). Steeping time will vary dramatically and you need to experiment to find the correct steeping time. Many oolongs are perfect at 3-4 minutes, some need 6-8 minutes.

Green teas: should steep at temperatures between 160°-180° F and should typically be steeped for much less time, about 2-3 minutes.

White teas: are the most delicate and should be steeped in temperatures between 150°-160° F. Typically they should be steeped for around 2 minutes, although some can be steeped much longer with good results.

Pu-ehr teas: should be steeped in temperatures between 185°-195° F at least 7-8 minutes and can be steeped for much longer.

Tisanes: typically should be steeped in boiling (212° F) water for a minimum of 4-6 minutes, some for up to 10 minutes.

Tea and Caffeine

Average Milligrams of Caffeine per 8oz cup

Black Tea (per cup)	40
Oolong Tea (per cup)	30
Green Tea (per cup)	20
White Tea (per cup)	15
Decaffeinated Tea (per cup)	2
Herbal Tea / Tisane (per cup)	0

For Comparison Purposes

Average Milligrams of Caffeine per 8oz cup

Coffee (per cup)	80
Cola (per 12oz. can)	45



Did you know?

About 70% of the caffeine content in tea is released in the first five minutes of brewing. For a less caffeinated beverage, brew a cup or a pot, drain and re-infuse. Quality teas, such as those offered by 52teas can frequently be re-infused, sometimes multiple times.

The grades for whole leaf orthodox black tea (in ascending order) are:

- **OP** (Orange Pekoe—the smallest grade of whole leaf tea)
- **FOP** (Flowery Orange Pekoe)
- **GFOP** (Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe)
- **TGFOP** (Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe)
- **FTGFOP** (Fine Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe)
- **SFTGFOP** (Super Fine Tippy Golden Flowery Orange Pekoe)

Contrary to some popular belief, Orange Pekoe has nothing to do with the orange fruit. Instead, it likely refers to the Dutch royal House of Orange-Nassau. The Dutch East India company performed central role in bringing tea to Europe and may have marketed the tea as "Orange" to suggest a royal warrant.

A joke among tea aficionados is that "FTGFOP" stands for "Far Too Good For Ordinary People", but the fact is that these grades have more to do with the size of the leaf than they do with the quality of the beverage they will produce. An OP from a good estate cultivated and harvested under good conditions will always make a better cup of tea than an SFTGFOP of inferior quality.



52teas is a project of Zoomdweebie's Tea, where "We're Nerdy About Tea!" 52teas is committed to creating a new, hand crafted, artisan tea blend every week. Our blends are crafted in our Wichita, Kansas facilities using the best ingredients available.



Presents:

Everything you
always wanted to
know about ~~sex~~ ^{TEA!}*

*But were afraid to ask