

TEA TERMS

Tea, native to China, is now grown around the world. Tea plantations are abundant in Japan, India, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Africa, Indonesia and even the USA. Although there are about 3,500 varieties of loose leaf tea available today, all teas come from one species of plant, the *Camellia Sinensis*. The following terms may be familiar to some of you and quite confusing to others. These terms are used quite frequently in the tea industry. Maureen Ryan, Purveyor of Tea at Notting Hall

*"Gunpowder", also called pearl tea, takes its name from the shape it takes on during hand rolling.
"Pu-erh" literally means "camel's breath" which certainly gives rise to the imagination.
"Bi Luo Chun" is "green snail spring" because of the spiral twist its dried leaves develop.
"Chunmee" or "eyebrow tea" is so named because the leaves resemble a woman's finely formed brow.
"Shou Mei" or "longevity eyebrow" refers to the much more bristly brows of an older man.
"Orange Pekoe" (peck-o) is the leaf just below the bud, orange is the second or larger leaf.*

Agony of the leaves - The swirling around in the water of the leaves

Anxi - A famous tea-growing region in China.

Anti-oxidants – Substances found in tea in the form of polyphenols which combat free radicals.

Assam - Large leaf tea produced in the northeast region of India.

Bancha - Japanese for "late harvest" or tea made from large, hard leaves.

Bergamot - A small pear-shaped fruit, native to Italy, used to flavor Earl Grey.

Blend - Tea composed of different teas or from different estates

Brick tea - Tea that has been steamed, dried, pulverized and formed into a block or "brick".

Caddy - A container commonly used to store tea.

Caffeine – A naturally-occurring substance in many plants, including tea leaves.

Camellia sinensis - The evergreen plant used to produce tea - of which there are many varieties.

Cha - The Mandarin word for "tea"; also used in Japanese for "tea".

Chamomile – An herb believed to reduce stress and calm the nerves.

Chai - In India and Russia, this is the word for "tea".

Chanoyu - The Japanese Tea Ceremony.

Chunmee - Chinese for "eyebrow tea", the shape this hand-rolled tea is given.

Clonal - Tea plants grown by cloning the mother plant.

Clotted Cream – A thick, unsweetened cream made from milk with a high fat content.

Complex - A tea with many layers of flavor.

Congou - Or "gongfu" - the Chinese term for "skilled" which is required to make black tea.

Ctc - Method of manufacturing by cutting, tearing and curling into small pieces.

Darjeeling – A small leaf black tea grown in the mountainous region of northern India.

De-caffeinated – A chemical process to extract caffeine from the tea leaf.

Down - The fine hair-like growth on the underside of the leaf or bud.

Dust - The very finest of siftings of tea, generally used in tea bags.

English Breakfast – A blend of black teas, originally Keemun and Ceylon teas.

Fair Trade – Organizations working with growers and middlemen to improve lives of tea pluckers.

Fannings - Tiny bits of dried tea, also generally used in tea bags.

Fermentation - After withering and rolling, leaves are allowed to oxidize.

First flush - The new shoots picked from May through June.

Flavonoids - A kind of polyphenol found in tea and known as "catechins".

Gaiwan - Chinese handleless three-piece teacup (also spelled guywan)

Genmaicha - Japanese green tea with the addition of hulled rice kernels and popped corn.

Gongfu cha - From the Chinese "kung fu", requiring special skill; in tea service, it also applies to special skills for preparation and serving

Grade - After manufacture, leaves are divided into grades based on size.

Gunpowder - The first tea to be exported shaped like round pellets or "gunpowder".

Gyokuro - Known as "precious dew" and is the most prized of Japanese teas.

Houcha - Chinese for "thick tea"

Hoji cha - Japanese green tea that has been roasted.

Hyson - Many definitions as to its original source. Used for Chinese green tea.

Ikebana - Japanese term for flower arrangement

Infusion - The liquid obtained by brewing in hot water.

Irish Breakfast - A malty Assam blend usually requiring milk.

Jasmine - A flower native to the Persian Gulf brought to China in 3rd century.

Keemun - Tea grown in the Anhui Province of China

Lapsang souchong - Large leaf tea from the Fujian Province, generally produced with smoked pine.

Liquor - The liquid obtained by steeping tea.

Mao feng - A Chinese term meaning "hairpoint".

Matcha - Powdered Japanese green tea used in the Japanese Tea Ceremony, Chanoyu.

Maté - An herbal beverage native to Central and South American

Orthodox - The traditional method of manufacturing tea.

Oolong - From the Chinese word "wu-lung" meaning "black dragon", this tea is fermented half-way between black and green.

Organic - As with other crops, agriculture produced without chemicals, requiring certification.

Oxidation - Exposing the leaves to air to change the leaf from green to brown.

Pai mu tan - Also known as White Peony.

Pekoe - (Peck-ho) refers to a size of leaf, not a guide to quality.

Polyphenols - Compounds found in tea, now known as antioxidants.

Pouchong - Very lightly fermented, almost green tea, better known as "yellow tea".

Pu-erh - Aged Chinese tea, loose or compressed, valued for its medicinal properties.

Rooibos - Afrikan for "red bush", an herb which when oxidizes produces a red infusion.

Second flush - The second sprouting of leaves

Self drinker - A tea that stands alone and does not need milk or sugar.

Sencha - The most popular of Japanese green teas.

Tannin - The chemical component of tea known as polyphenols.

Tisane - A French word for herbal infusion.

Tee - Variations would be "the", "tey", "te", and "thee" - all mean "tea".

Tung Ting - A very lightly fermented pouchong - considered very rare and exceptional.

Tuo cha - Compressed tea shaped like a bird's nest.

Yin Zhen - Also known as Silver Needles, because of its silvery appearance.

Yixing - An area in northeast China also known for producing clay used for teapots.

Yunnan - A tea-producing province in China

Zhenmei - A higher grade of Chunmee or "Precious eyebrow" from the Zhejiang Province, China.

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