

Tea and Coffee Around The World



By Rachel Bubb

I love tea and coffee, but I haven't always liked coffee. I didn't like coffee until college and always got steamed milk or something else if I ever went to a coffee shop before then (which wasn't that often!). A few years after college, I worked at Peet's Tea and Coffee for about a half a year and loved it. They offered special classes for their employees to learn about different kinds of coffees and teas. I learned so much and am so thankful for that experience. My husband worked as a manager of a different coffee shop for several years and then worked roasting coffee. It's nice to have freshly roasted coffee at home every day! However, I can't drink regular coffee every day, otherwise I get headaches. I try to either have a few days without coffee or tea or just have herbal tea and decaf coffee a few days a week instead. I hope this book will introduce the world of tea and coffee to your family and the people that grow them around the world (and can learn some geography as well).



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Chapter I: History of Tea

Tea is a really old drink that first started in China. Before we talk about tea, we should talk about the tea plant first. Tea comes from the plant called *Camellia Sinensis*. This plant typically grows in



warmer climates and up in the mountains. There's a saying that "famous mountains give birth to famous tea" because the soil and atmosphere are so unique in these tea growing areas.

There's an old Chinese legend about a man named Shen Nong, who started picking leaves from all sorts of plants to see which were edible and which tasted nice. He was very brave because some of the plants he might have tried could've

been poisonous. This is what happened to Abraham Lincoln's mother. They think she died from drinking poisoned milk. Maybe the cow she got the milk from had eaten some white snakeroot plant or maybe she had accidentally picked some snakeroot plant herself and boiled it in the milk to add some flavor. Clearly, she didn't know the plant was poisonous or that the cow had eaten some of the plant. He was nine years old when she died. This sort of thing happened countless times in history as people explored what they could and couldn't eat. It was all trial by error.

Thankfully, for Shen Nong, the leaves weren't poisonous. The legend says that he was tired one day after walking a long time. He sat down and boiled some water to drink. Some tree leaves fell into the pot. He drank the water and loved the taste of it. It also helped give him energy. Then in the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC), people started using tea as medicine. People kept drinking tea, but the

“golden age” of tea drinking was probably the Tang and Song Dynasties. This is when people started thinking more about how to process tea. They started steaming the tea leaves, making them into tea cakes, and dried them again to sell, store for later, or to take to other places. Tang Dynasty is famous for many things, one of them being poetry. Some of the famous poets wrote poems about tea, which means that tea drinking was very popular at the time. It’s also around this time that tea was brought to Japan and started to be grown there.



One of the more famous poems of tea from this time is called “Seven Cups (or Bowls) of Tea” by Lu Tang (790-835 AD).

One bowl moistens the lips and throat;
Two bowls shatters loneliness and melancholy;
Three bowls, thinking hard, one produces five thousand volumes;
Four bowls, lightly sweating, the iniquities of a lifetime disperse towards the pores.
Five bowls cleanses muscles and tendons;
Six bowls accesses the realm of spirit;
One cannot finish the seventh bowl, but feels only a light breeze spring up under the arms.

Over the years tea became more and more popular. In the 1500s and 1600s many countries in Europe and other places heard about tea and started drinking it. When the British empire expanded, one of the biggest companies was the East Indian Trade Company, which ran from the 1600 to the late 1800s. This company brought tea and a number of other items from India and the East to Europe in the West. For a long time tea was expensive in the UK. Tea was such a big commodity that only the lady of the house would touch the tea leaves and make tea with them to make sure that none of the leaves

were wasted. Sometimes the servants of the big estates would be lucky to use the tea leaves a second or a third time after the lady of the house had used them.

Perhaps you've heard of "High Tea" or had a tea party with tea, scones, and other scrumptious foods. The tradition for this came in the 1840s with the Duchess of Bedford, wanted a snack in the afternoon. At this time in the UK, many people only had two meals: breakfast and dinner (around 8pm). She started having a small meal of sandwiches, snacks, and cakes in the afternoon with tea and milk. For her it was the perfect meal in between meals. She invited people over to have tea with her and soon the idea caught on.

Most people in the UK enjoy their tea with milk and sugar. However, one famous baker (Mary Berry) from England commented that she only has milk in her tea. She grew up in World War II, when food (including sugar) was rationed.

Her mom told her and her siblings that they could either have sugar in their tea or save it so she could use the sugar to make a special dessert once a week. They all chose the dessert. She got so used to having no sugar in her tea that for years and years, she didn't have sugar in her tea.



My great aunt passed on a gift of tea cups to my sisters and me.



When her and her husband retired, they went on several trips to Europe. The souvenir of her choice to bring back was tea cups. She brought back quite a bit of tea cups over the years and passed it on to my sisters and me. We've loved putting together fancy tea parties for our kids and friends. It's such a great tradition that I want to pass it on and buy tea cups to give to my own kids in the future.