



Wellness Rx Special Report: Herbal Tea

A relaxing hot cup of tea can bring comfort during a rainy day, a meal with friends, or a peaceful moment of mindfulness. Herbal tea holds significance in many cultures as a **symbol of togetherness** and social gathering, many of which traditions continue today. The history of herbal tea is also enriched with its use for natural remedies. The most common medicinal indications of herbal teas include aid with **sleep, digestion, the nervous system, the immune system, hormonal stress and anxiety, cold and flu symptoms, energy, and detoxification** support.

Tea drinking has become more popular in recent years, especially in America, reflecting increasing consumer interest in wellness and health-conscious behaviors. Among the most popular tea flavors are **chamomile, ginger, and peppermint**. Pakistan, with the U.S. close behind, leads global imports of tea with annual purchases equating 640 million USD worth. Indulging in the healing properties of tea can introduce healthy **antioxidants** and stress relieving elements into your daily routine. This article will detail teas from around the world and their **medicinal properties**. Here is a condensed guide of common ailments tea may alleviate:



Herbal Tea Preparations and Healing Properties

Tea is the **most popular beverage in the world**, second only to water. According to a study in 2013, Australia and most countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa, **prefer tea over coffee**. In North America, however, **two-thirds of American adults** drink coffee each day (66%) making coffee the most popular

Anti-inflammation and nausea

Ginger Root

Antioxidant, anti-microbial, and calming

Lemon Balm

Detoxification

Dandelion Leaf

Immune stimulation during acute illness

Echinacea or Elderberry

Nervous system calming

Ashwagandha

beverage in the states. Most South American countries also prefer coffee over tea despite the prominence of the herbal tea Yerba Mate.

Herbal tea drinking helps to support **long-term health** as a gentler medicine. For this reason, high quality herbal teas may be an excellent option for those who are more sensitive. During **acute illness, herbal tinctures or capsules** are recommended because of their higher potency. Typically



steeping 2-4 cups of herbal tea per day will maximize the benefits.

Steeping tea is the process of **extracting the herbal compounds from the plant in water**. Herbal tea typically only needs to be steeped once.

Herbs with high astringency, however, like green tea, may need to be steeped 2-3 times, discarding the first two and drinking the more diluted of the three to avoid too bitter of a mixture. Steeping tea is most effective in a **covered container**, preventing compounds from evaporating. It is

recommended to prioritize **loose leaf tea**, avoiding plastic tea bags that can increase exposure to microplastics.¹

For those of us managing anxiety and high stress, caffeine free teas with low tannin content may be the best option.² Caffeine is often linked with a **higher risk of anxiety**. Herbal teas that contain **caffeine from highest to least** content is estimated as follows:

matcha, pu-erh, black, yerba mate, green, white, yellow, yaupon

holly, and de-caffeinated tea. To clarify these different types of tea:

black, pu-erh, green, yellow, white, and matcha tea all come from the plant ***Camellia Sinensis***, colloquially known as the **green tea** plant.

These names are each a variation in how the plant leaves are grown, oxidized, and processed to produce a unique flavor. For example, matcha is a shade-grown green tea that is ground up into a fine

powder and added directly to an emulsifier to maximize the antioxidant and calming compounds it contains.



What we colloquially refer to as herbal tea is technically not tea because it does not come from the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*) but is typically composed of flowers, fruit, herbs, or spices from other plants.

Here's a breakdown of **caffeine content in coffees and teas** from the Mayo Clinic ¹⁵:

Drink	Size in oz (mL)	Caffeine (mg)
Brewed	8(237)	96
Brewed decaf	8(237)	1
Espresso	1(30)	63
Espresso, decaf	1(30)	1
Instant	8(237)	62
Instant decaf	8(237)	2
Brewed Black tea	8(237)	48
Brewed black, decaf	8(237)	2
Brewed green	8(237)	29
Ready-to-drink, black bottled	8(237)	26

This chart displays that brewed coffee typically contains the most caffeine compared to other forms of coffee and any tea. Coffee contains approximately **twice that of black tea**.

Regarding tannins, black tea typically contains the highest levels of tannins. These tannins can irritate the stomach when consumed on an empty stomach. For those with low iron, it is recommended to drink black tea in between meals, as tannins can have a hindering effect on the body's ability to absorb iron from foods, especially plant-based foods. If you have normal iron levels, tannins will likely not have an effect on your iron.²

When selecting which herbal teas are right for your health, there are several healthy compounds that various herbal teas contain. Many teas are **rich in antioxidants**.³ These compounds essentially prevent “free radicals” or toxic chemicals from damaging your cells. When left unchecked, these free

radicals can cause **damage to your DNA or cells**. Preventing this damage to your cells and DNA is vital to reducing the likelihood of developing chronic diseases such as cancer. Various antioxidants in tea include **anthocyanins, flavonoids, and catechins**. It has been found that in green tea, for example, about 30% of its dry weight is antioxidants. Aside from tea, you can also find antioxidants in certain fruits and vegetables.

Certain herbal teas contain **L-theanine**. This amino acid, found in matcha and other forms of green tea, may help you to relax. L-theanine promotes alpha brain waves, dopamine, and serotonin, thus increasing focus and calmness. Lastly, many herbal teas contain various amounts of vitamins and minerals, these

include calcium, iron, potassium, magnesium, and zinc. Tea is also a source of **C, E, and B vitamins**.



Herbal Teas from Around the World

Traditional African, Asian, Native American, and South American Herbal Teas

(Arranged Alphabetically)

The table on the following pages consists of the most popular herbs used in tea from around the world. The indication column includes what each herb can be used for. Each picture presents the main part of the plant being used in the tea. Any plant marked with an asterisk (*) grows in the United States and thus could be grown in your backyard. Use this table as a guide to herbal teas and how to use them.

<u>PLANT NAME & PARTS(S) USED</u>	<u>INDICATION</u>	<u>PICTURE</u>	<u>ORIGIN</u>
Ashwagandha - Root	Stress resilience, restful sleep, caffeine-free energy, relieve states of frazzled worrying minds, stimulates the immune system		India
Astragalus - Root	Relieves stress, boosts immune system, cardiovascular health		Northeast Asia
Burdock Root / Leaf / Seed	Liver health, laxative, digestion, skin health		Temperate Europe and Asia
Calendula ⁴ - Flower	High antioxidant content, reduces oxidative stress, ⁵ promotes wound healing, antifungal, antimicrobial, fights gingivitis, sore nipples		Mediterranean

Catnip Leaf / Flower	Stress relief, improved sleep, nervous system aid, gas relief, prevents muscle spasms, promotes sweating for detox or cold symptoms		Southern Eurasia
Chaga *	Boosts immune response, stomach health, liver health, skin health, intestinal health, detoxification		High Latitude Northern Hemisphere
Chamomile⁶ - Flower	Common cold symptoms, ulcers, baby crying, gastrointestinal issues, sleep, picotoxin-induced seizures, pancreatic stress, heart disease, Premenstrual Syndrome, boosts immune system, <u>avoid if you have severe allergies</u>		Southeast Europe
Cinnamon - Inner Bark	Reduce allergies, lower blood pressure, lower blood sugar, lower cholesterol, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory		Asia

Cranberry * - Fruit	Urinary tract health, antiviral, astringent, cardioprotective, diuretic, effective when unsweetened		North America
Cleavers * Leaf / Stem / Flower	Boosts immune system, relieves psoriasis and eczema, fights cancer cells, anti-inflammatory, relieves muscles spasms		Eurasia
Cordyceps *	Caffeine-free energy, increased stamina, respiratory system, adrenal function, kidney, lower blood sugar, boosts immune system, liver health, libido		Northern Hemisphere
Dandelion Leaf / Root	Digestion, lowers water retention, detoxification, lower blood pressure, lower blood sugar, lowers LDL cholesterol, a source of calcium, potassium, folate, vitamin C, D, K		Europe

Echinacea * Leaf / Flower / Root	Boosts immune system on the onset of illness, soothe sore throats, metabolism, lymphatic drainage, throat coat		North America
Elderberry * Flower/ Fruit	Boosts immune system, Fights infections		North America
Eleuthero (Siberian Ginseng) Flower / Fruit	Caffeine-free energy, stress relief, lower blood sugar, lymphatic function, grounds your mind and body, <u>may increase blood pressure</u>		Northeast Asia

Fennel - Fruit	Digestive aid, nausea and vomiting relief, menstrual discomfort, diuretic, eye health, cataracts, eye wash, respiratory discomfort, appetite suppression		Mediterranean Shores
Ginger - Root	Anti-inflammatory (headaches, body aches), nausea, vomiting, and dyspepsia, modulator and anti-inflammatory to the immune system, congestion and cough, motion sickness, regulates blood sugar, <u>may reduce blood clotting</u>		Southeast Asia
Ginseng * (Asian ginseng, Chinese ginseng, Korean ginseng) - Root	Caffeine-free energy, gut microbiome, improves focus, increases stamina		North America + Asia

Green tea	Regulates the immune system, gut microbiome, fights various forms of cancer (lung, mammary gland, skin esophagus, stomach, liver, pancreas, intestine, prostate, and colon), rich in antioxidants, reduces oxidative stress, reduces bad cholesterol and obesity, L-theanine (improves calmness, concentration, reaction time and memory), <u>high caffeine content</u>		China
Goji - Berries	Improves liver health, boosts immune system, nutritive tonic, boosts energy, cardio tonic, detoxification, caffeine-free energy		China

Hemp	Anxiety and stress relief, may help sleep, pain relief, heart health (anti-inflammation and lower blood pressure)		Central Asia Check out Dutch Harvest Hemp Tea <i>(Also sold in Wellness Rx)</i>
Hibiscus	Antiviral, rich in antioxidants, reduces oxidative stress, boosts immune system, cardiovascular health, decreases bad cholesterol, lower blood pressure, detoxify liver, may aid against bird flu		South Asia + South Pacific Islands
Honeybush	Boosts immune system (for prevention and during acute illness), high antioxidant content, reduces oxidative stress, premenstrual support with phytoestrogens, balances hormone levels during menopause and menstruation		South Africa

Kankaliba - Leaf	Modulates the immune system, caffeine-free energy, lowers blood pressure, purification of the body, liver detoxification		West Africa
Korean mint - Aerial parts	Relieves summer heat, improves appetite, according to Traditional Chinese Medicine removes dampness		Eastern Asia
Lavender - Flower	Settles nervous system, eases stress, relaxes digestive system, sleep quality		Eurasia + Northern Africa
Lemon balm - Leaf	Relieves nervous system issues (anxiety, stress, headaches, migraines, tooth aches, neck aches, and earaches), high antioxidant content, reduces oxidative stress, digestions, sleep, antimicrobial, uplifting scent		Southern Europe

Lemongrass	Alleviates pain, decreases inflammation, induces sleep, improves digestion		Southeastern Asia
Licorice - Root / Rhizome	Aids in digestion, throat health for hoarse voices, respiratory issues in cold, dry weather		Southern Europe + Western Asia
Linden * - Flower	Improves sleep quality, relieves stress, anti-viral, respiratory issues, muscle spasms, safe for children		Northern Hemisphere.
Lion's Mane *	Brain function, brain tissue health, nerves, synapses, gastrointestinal function, memory		Northern Hemisphere

Maitake *	Boosts immune response, lower blood sugar, prostate health, breast health, stomach health, liver health		Northern Hemisphere
Motherwort Stem / Leaf / Flower	Women's health (alleviates menstrual and menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, cramps, anxiety, stress, and nervous tension), heart health, hypothyroidism, relieves heart palpitations and tachycardia		Eurasia
Nettle * - Root	Relieves allergies, muscle weakness, joint inflammation, prostate health, rich in iron		North America, Eurasia, and North Africa
Passionflower Flower / Stem / Flower	Soothes nerves, promotes relaxation, eases anxiety for better sleep		South America

Plantago asiatica	Diuretic, detoxification, clears heat		East Asia
Peppermint - Leaf	Headache/migraine relief, respiratory relief, menstrual cramps, oral health, anti-microbial, anti-tumor, stress, and anxiety relief		Europe and the Middle East
Red clover - Flower	Detoxification, skin health, harbinger of luck according to Irish and Celtic folklore		Europe, Western Asia, and Northwest Africa
Red raspberry * - Leaf	Women's health: may aid in inducing labor, cramps and pain associated with menstrual cramps		North America and Eurasia

Reishi - Fruiting Body	Boosts immune system, improves stamina, reduces stress, “The Mushroom of Immortality”		East Asia
Rose⁷ * - Flower	Modulates the immune system, skin health, menstrual cramps, bloating, reduces stress + anxiety, high antioxidant content, reduces oxidative stress, restful sleep, good mood, aids the heart chakra according to Hindu and Buddhist ideologies		Northern Hemisphere
Rosemary - Leaf	Cognitive health (memory, depression, fatigue, brain fog, and hysteria), blood pressure, reduces inflammation		Mediterranean
Rooibos red bush - Leaf	High antioxidant content, reduces oxidative stress,		South Africa

Schisandra - berry	Detoxification, stress relief, astringent, liver health, homeostasis		East Asia
Skullcap * Leaf / Stem / Flower	Sleep aid, stress relief, calms nervous system		North America, Europe, Eastern Asia, and North Africa
Slippery Elm *	Throat coat, digestive aid, wards cold in winter		North America
Turkey Tail *	Boosts immune system, liver health, prostate health, breast health, lung health, kidney health		North America, Asia, & Europe

Turmeric	Digestive aid, joint and limb mobility, high antioxidant content (curcumin), reduces oxidative stress, anti-inflammatory (joints, muscles, immune)		Southeast Asia
Valerian Root / Rhizome	Eases nerves, headache relief, digestive aid, sleep-aid		Eurasia
Yaupon ⁸ *	High antioxidant content reduces oxidative stress, diuretic. Contains natural caffeine		Southeastern United States
Yerba mate ⁹ - Leaf	Caffeine, high antioxidant content, reduces oxidative stress, antimicrobial		South America

Traditions of Tea

Many cultures around the world hold certain teas as culturally significant and as a symbol of hospitality or bringing people together. Cultures such as those in China, Japan, Morocco, Tibet, India, or South America hold tea ceremonies as a moment of mindfulness and social gathering. In addition to providing health benefits, tea provides a symbol of togetherness and cultural history.

West and South African Tea Drinking

Many native African herbs offer medicinal health benefits and simultaneously hold cultural symbolism. Some regions frame tea as a symbol of welcoming to guests. Within South Africa, the preparation of **rooibos** tea symbolizes togetherness. In West Africa, **kinkeliba** tea is brewed for the breaking of fast during Ramadan. These symbolisms make tea not only beneficial to human health but a social and cultural phenomenon as well.⁸



Native American Yaupon Holly Tea

Yaupon holly tea was first harvested by the Native Americans for its health benefits. The tea was served during Native American diplomatic meetings, first to the tribal leaders and then to all as a symbol of friendship and acceptance. Later when European colonists arrived, the tea was harvested and sold from America to Europe. It is presumed **trade of yaupon tea was purposely deterred** by English sovereignty and botanist William Aiton who created the scientific name for the herb: *ilex. vomitoria*. This name put a massive damper on European demand for yaupon tea trade from America. In turn, European nations replaced yaupon trade with Asian tea such as green and black tea.⁹

South America Yerba Mate

The social culture of preparing yerba mate tea extends throughout South America. This tea is seen as a symbol of sociability and togetherness and is often enjoyed with friends, family, strangers, and even alone as a meaningful morning routine. This beverage is traditionally prepared in a hollowed-out gourd called a calabaza in Spanish. This gourd comes in various colors and sizes. The yerba mate plant is mainly cultivated in Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil.¹⁰



India Chai Tea

In India the name “chai” is inclusive of all tea. The specialized mixture of spices that is commonly known as chai tea in the United States is typically a blend of milk, sugar, black tea, ginger, cardamom, cinnamon, and other spices. In India chai tea is a symbol of hospitality. Street chai stalls are centers for community and conversation. Each region of India has their own variations of chai flavors and ingredients **representing their local culture.**¹¹



Turkish Tea Traditions

In Türkiye offering tea to visitors is a gesture of friendship and respect. It is essential at social gatherings and even offered for free in some shops as a **symbol of welcome** to guests. Turkish tea houses are common in cities where primarily men are allowed to visit and sip tea. A special pot is used to prepare Turkish tea, called a “çaydanlık”. In this two-tiered pot water is boiled in the bottom pot and tea leaves with a little water are placed in the top.

Chinese Tea Traditions

The nation where tea drinking first became **explosively popular**, tea continues to be an important part of meals and social gatherings. The Chinese tea ceremony, *Gong Fu Cha* (“making tea with skill”) uses a high leaf-to-water ratio and multiple short infusions to extract a particular level of flavor and notes from the tea. The ceremony traditionally involves a clay non-shiny teapot that absorbs chemicals from tea that give the teapot a natural shine over-time. The tea after it is steeped is poured into an open clay pot that holds the steeped tea without letting it steep further and ruining the flavor.¹²

Tea History

According to Chinese legends, the first ever cup of tea was made by accident when a tea tree leaf fell into Emperor Shen Nong’s cup of boiling water in 2737 BC. When he tried the mixture, he declared that tea gives vigor to the body; thus, tea was invented and used primarily as a medicinal beverage. Around 300 A.D., tea became a daily drink. Later during the Tang and Song Dynasty (780 A.D.), scholar Lu Yu published the first definitive book, *Cha Ching*, or *The Tea Classic*, based on his twenty-year study of tea. These publications helped to elevate tea drinking to a high status throughout China and tea drinking bloomed into an art form inspiring poems and paintings. This popularized tea, drawing tea-growers to the capital. China began to share this knowledge with neighboring countries such as Japan and Taiwan. Green tea wasn’t introduced into Western societies until the 1600s when Dutch merchants began to trade with East-Asia and later introduced green tea to South Asia.



Herbal Tea in Traditional Chinese Medicine and Chinese Markets Today

While traveling in Shanghai, Edward Ullmann, CEO of Pharmacy for the Public Good, was given a tour of a Traditional Chinese Medicine market. Most Chinese medicine is not at all similar to that in the U.S.



Ed was astounded because the markets were selling various herbs in bulk and the pharmacy within the Shanghai Medical Center primarily filled/compounded herbal prescriptions with **only one wall allocated for Western medicine**. In the above photo, tea herbs are sold as loose-leaf products, pictured left to right: 康奈 (carnation flower: good for relaxation and

antioxidants) 千日红 amaranth flower: good for antioxidants and immune boosting) 云南甜茶, (green tea).

According to a report by the World Health Organization, traditional medicine is used today in **170 countries**. Traditional medicine is particularly prominent in mainland China. A study conducted in the 2010s reports **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) physicians accounted for 45.1% of all physicians**, and **TCM pharmacists accounted for 51.7%** of the total pharmacists in hospitals from 2004 to 2016. Overall, **TCM prescriptions accounted for 46.6%** of all prescriptions and their use continues to grow. A study on hospitals in China reports **private** Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) hospitals have increased from 294 in 2004 to 1560 in 2016. In addition, TCM physicians increased (by 0.280%) and TCM pharmacists increased (by 0.298%). Qingping Herbal Market (清平中草药市场) is one of China's oldest state-approved herb markets. This market is the largest herbal market in the nation with 1,800 merchants and over 500 different types of herbs from rare mushrooms and dried

roots to fruit peels. The market is a working wholesale center serving as a symbol for promotion of TCM and Chinese culture.¹³

Growing and Preparing Tea

Making your own herbal tea may seem complicated, but here are the step-by-step instructions on how to do it yourself. Before you can make herbal tea, you need to know how to harvest the correct part and when. For softer parts such as leaves, flowers, fruits, and sometimes the stem, harvest in the morning hours around 9 to 11. This is when the dew has evaporated, and the essential oils are most active. To harvest leaves and soft stems, **snip the top third** of the plant growth and use only the **young, green** parts near the center. To harvest fruit and flowers, pluck, or snip right below the base.



For harder parts such as roots, seeds, bark, rhizomes, mushrooms and hard stems, harvest at the **end of fall or the beginning of spring** at any time of day. These times of year are when the aerial parts are dying and sending their energy into the roots. To harvest roots and rhizomes, gently pull the plant from the soil and immediately chop into slices. To harvest seeds, snip the seed head which is located at the base of where a flower grew and rub between your hands to separate the seeds. To harvest bark, shave a small vertical strip from one side to not damage the tree. To harvest hard stems, just snip at the base and remove any leaves. To harvest mushroom fruiting bodies, slice right at the base of the stem with a knife or pair of scissors.

Essentially, there are only two ways of brewing herbal teas: **infusion and decoction**. Infusion requires 3 crushed tablespoons of the soft parts of the plant per cup of water. Rinse the herbs with

water briefly and pat dry. Boil the appropriate amount of water in a covered teapot and let sit for a few minutes. Then, steep the crushed herbs for 5 to 10 minutes in the hot water. Decoction requires 1 tablespoon of chopped hard parts of the plant per cup of water. Put the herbs and water in a covered saucepan and bring to a boil. Once boiling, lower the heat to simmer for 30 minutes. After it simmers, strain the fluid into a cup and enjoy!¹⁴

Making your own herbal tea is a much safer way to consume tea without worrying about drinking microplastics. Many name brand tea companies use some sort of plastic for their tea bags or the packaging which can leach into your tea and break down into harmful substances at and above water's boiling point. If making your own herbal tea is not an option, **loose leaf tea** is also a great way to avoid microplastics in your tea.¹

Tea: A Growing Industry

The tea industry has been propelled in recent years by tea specialty stores, ready to drink products and a **shifting focus** of consumer interest from sugary caffeinated drinks to **health and wellness**. Estimates of the tea industry's economic upswing predicts the global herbal tea market will reach **\$4.14 billion by 2028**. With the growing prioritization for preventive healthcare and natural remedies, herbal tea sales continue to grow. The long-term health benefits such as antioxidants and calming properties of these beverages make them a powerful supplement in your diet. In addition to health benefits, herbal tea can be an important and meaningful part of a self-care routine whether that's with friends and family or in preparation for sleep.

Dare to be different. Explore the adventure of herbal tea harvesting, the health benefits, its rich world history and most importantly, share a moment of mindfulness with a loved one.

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Check out [Dutch Harvest Hemp Tea](#)

Also sold in Wellness Rx.

Glossary

Detoxification - the cleansing of the gastrointestinal system of wastes

Diuretic - the increased production of urine

Dyspepsia - indigestion; impaired digestion

Hypothyroidism - slowing of the body's metabolism which can lead to fatigue and weight gain

Laxative - loosens stools and increases bowel movement

pH - the scale of how acidic or basic a solution is

Phytoestrogen - plant-derived compounds that are functionally identical to estrogen.

Footnotes

1. For more information about microplastics, read [this article](#).
2. Read this article to learn more about [tannins](#).
3. See this article about [antioxidants](#).
4. See this article about [calendula tea](#).
5. Read this article to learn more about [oxidative stress](#).
6. Read this article to learn more about [chamomile tea](#).
7. For more information about rose tea, read [this article](#).
8. To learn more about African teas, read [this article](#).
9. For more information on yaupon tea, read [this article](#)
10. Read this article to learn more about [yerba mate](#).
11. Visit this link for more information on [chai tea](#).
12. To learn more about Chinese tea, read [this article](#).
13. Read this article to learn more about [Chinese tea markets](#).
14. For more information on preparing tea, read [this article](#).
15. To read more about caffeine content in beverages read [here](#).

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