

# ☐☐The Tea

*Tea, one of the three major beverages of the world (the other two are coffee and cocoa), is called "Cha" in its homeland country, China. As the old saying goes, "Seven necessary supplies on the life: bavin, rice, oil, salt, sauce, vinegar and tea", tea is regarded as one of the most important things in daily life in ancient China. China has formed profound culture of tea. When tea was introduced to Europe, British fall in love with this drink and created the unique English tea culture- European afternoon tea.*

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## The origin and of tea

As it's known to all, China is the origin country of tea, it was in the South-West part of China that tea-shrubs were first found. However, dispute still remains on the exact time Chinese began to drink tea. The time Chinese discovered tea can



be date back to some 4700 years ago, the earliest record of tea are some legends of Yan Emperor, the god of agriculture, who was know to have invented agriculture and medicine. According to one of them, Yan Emperor tasted hundreds of herb, one day when he was hit by 72 kinds of poisons, he discovered the tea tree luckily and used the tea leaves to neutralize all poisons. From then on, tea was regarded as a healthy drink.

## Chinese tea

Since each place has its own climate and proper geographic feature, residents of different places enjoy various kinds of tea. Tea can be divided into 6 kinds according to different technics: green tea, black tea, oolong tea, white tea, yellow tea and dark tea (brick tea). Strangely, black tea is called

red tea in Chinese, and dark tea is called black tea. Different kinds of tea have its special taste and smell, and furthermore, traditional Chinese doctor believe each kind of tea have a particular property and action to built our body.

### **Chinese tea culture**

It's a traditional manners to make tea for friends when they come for a visit. Nowadays, many shop owners will set an expensive root carving tea table with tea set in their shop, invite their consumer to sit at the table and make a cup of tea for them. It is more than a business.



In Chinese, we don't say "drinking tea" but say "savoring tea". When brewing tea, there are first brewing, second brewing, third brewing... Each brewing has its own taste, the slight differences cannot be told but being savored slowly. You will find one maybe more mellow while one is lighter, one is bitter while one is a bit of sweet. I still remember when I was in the junior high school, a teacher made tea for me, he told me there were seven brewing in the flow and if I can understand it, I understand life.

At first, the tea is light and insipidity, I thought it was the baby time; Then it became sweet, I believe it means the joyful childhood; When the tea is mellow, I guessed it was during the prime of one's life; Then the tea became bitter, maybe it referred the low ebb of life; At last, the water was insipidity again and it was time to enjoy peace when you're old. Though the teacher did not tell the correct answer, I recall the seven brewing of life every time I savoring tea, maybe until I am old.

Savoring tea is not only a way to enjoy the drink, but also a way to enjoy the life. My father has a set of tea set made of

delicate china, he really enjoy brewing tea with them. Though it's a little troublesome, the taste is different from the tea brewed in the glass. He doesn't think it waste his time but regard it as snatching a bit of leisure from a busy schedule.

### The spread of tea in Britain



In 17century, Chinese tea adopted formally into the European market by Portugal and Netherlands through trades. Since then, tea became an important Chinese export and many western countries had joined the ranks of Chinese tea

consumption, but only England formed its own tea culture system.

British began to drink tea during the mid-17 century. It was princess Catherine of Portugal that brought the tea-drinking to the English royal court after she married Charles II in 1662. And the fashion soon spread beyond these elite circles to the middle classes.

### Afternoon tea

While Chinese enjoy various kinds of tea, black is the most popular tea in Britain. They prefer some milk, lemon or sugar in the black tea to make milk tea and lemon tea. In the past, tea is not cheap and often adulterated with leaves from other plants, which made it more affordable but much less pleasant. These led to the popularity in black tea, and a parallel increase in the addition of milk to tea.

Afternoon tea was invented by Anna Maria, the wife of the seventh Duke of Bedford. In 1841 she started drinking tea and having a bite to eat in the mid-afternoon. Since there is a gap of 6 hours between lunch and dinner, most people felt hungry before dinner and the fashion for afternoon tea had become widespread.



Traditional afternoon tea usually use Darjeeling, Earl Gray and Ceylon, served in delicate bone china or silver teapot, tea cup, dessert plate. Dessert is an important part of afternoon tea, which is served on a three-story plate, various

sandwiches with cheese and ham are on the first story, second story are usually scones, the traditional dessert in Britain, and the third story is cakes and fruit towers. These desserts should be eaten from bottom to top, from salty to sweet.

Afternoon tea is more than a habit but also an important social activity in the past. Nowadays, it also becomes an attitude of life- delicate and elegance, it reveals the slow down culture, everything stopped for the tea, just enjoy your own tranquil time.