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When talking about tea here in the South, the assumption was we meant the sweet and iced variety. Not anymore.

While it might be a little disingenuous to say that the most commonly consumed beverage on earth except for water is making a comeback, well, tea is making a comeback - minus all the sugar and ice.

It's become trendy, to the point where most grocery stores now sell boxes of green, white and Oolong teas in addition to a variety of specialty teas intended to be drunk hot. The American specialty tea market almost quadrupled from 1990 to 2007 to top more than \$6 billion a year, according to the Tea Association of the USA.

One of the main reasons teas are hot these days (pun intended) is that they, with their antioxidants and lower caffeine levels, are considered to be much healthier than the soft drinks and sweet tea many of us grew up consuming.

It's believed tea may help reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and certain cancers. It's also been associated with oral health and bone health and has been shown to support the immune system.

For a history lesson, check out "Tea Tidbits and History," a special presentation on tea and tea parties and the history and culture of tea with expert Marilyn Nutter from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Jan. 21 at the Gaston County Public Library Mount Holly Branch, 245 W. Catawba Ave. Hot tea and light refreshments will be served at the free public event for adults. Bring your own teacup!

What Are You Getting From Your Tea? According to nutrition expert Gloria Tsang, founder of HealthCastle.com, tea can offer various health benefits. Here's what some of those benefits are. One piece of advice - when looking for the right tea for you, focus on taste. Whether you're drinking a black tea or a green tea, it'll be good for you.

Black, red, and oolong teas: These teas are made from partially dried, crushed, and fermented leaves from the Camellia plant - which is the source of tea's polyphenols.

Popular blends include English breakfast tea, Irish breakfast tea, Darjeeling tea and Lady Grey tea. Earl Grey tea traditionally applies to black tea, though it can be used for other teas that contain oil from the bergamot orange, a fragrant citrus fruit.

Green and white teas: These teas are also made from the polyphenol-rich Camellia plant. They are processed less than black tea, and white tea is made from very young new leaves.

Herbal tea: Herbal teas are actually infusions made with herbs, flowers, roots, spices, or other parts of plants. They are not made from the Camellia plant, so are not technically teas at all, but "tisanes." They do not contain polyphenols, but may offer relaxation and calming effects.

Herbal teas are plentiful and include: anise, cinnamon, chamomile, ginger root, ginseng, mint, pennyroyal and raspberry, among others.

Rooibos tea: Rooibos tea is getting a lot of attention (and is often marketed as red tea), but it's really just another herbal tea - with no polyphenols. Again, it may offer relaxation, but it has not yet been shown to offer any concrete health benefits.

Decaf tea: Decaf tea, no matter what color, has had the caffeine removed through a process that may also remove the beneficial polyphenols. It's not yet clear if decaf tea offers the same benefits as regular tea, which has half the caffeine of coffee.

Bottled iced tea: Most bottled iced tea drinks contain way more sugar than actual tea - so you can expect a sugar rush, but no real health benefits.

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- Oldest First | Newest First
dixiegn wrote: I think a few here have switched from lemon to SOUR GRAPES.
slider987 wrote: sweet teal is there any other.
smithfam wrote: The restaurants that I've been in that have sugar-laden tea, also sell unsweetened tea. I do have to say that none of those restaurants every poured anything down the throats of my innocent children...sugar-laden or otherwise. There was always a choice that I, the parent, could make.
sronce wrote: I will be making bootleg sweet tea at my house when they do.
imfromgastonia wrote: I am currently forced to frequent local restaurants and have sugar-laden tea poured down the throats of my innocent children. We need this law now!
tstocker wrote: Just wait long enough and some group will call for a law banning sugar sweetened tea, or anything else with sugar in it...

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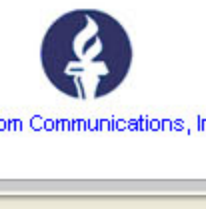
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