

My Cup of Tea

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~ By Kirsten Antony R.N., C.R. ~

“When tea becomes ritual, it takes its place at the heart of our ability to see greatness in small things. Where is beauty to be found? In great things that, like all else, are doomed to die, or in small things that aspire to nothing, yet know how to get a jewel of infinity in a single moment?”—Muriel Barbery

As Ms. Barbery is quoted above, drinking tea can be a transformative, magical experience. Many cultures from China to England to Japan have found drinking tea to bring meaning and ceremony to daily life. To find ritual in a warm cup of tea is a creature comfort many of us know all too well. Whether we wake up with a punch of caffeine from our English breakfast or like to doze off with a mug of Chamomile, we are enjoying the act of ritual as well as the medicinal properties of the beverage itself. What was first known as medicine and then grew into a beverage, now is enjoyed as both a medicine and beverage. As a beverage, tea is the second most popular drink in the world; the most popular being water. As a medicine, numerous studies show a myriad of health benefits. Clinical studies have shown that certain substances in tea have an effect on inhibiting certain types of tumor cells in cancer. Polyphenols are the group of compounds found in tea that are antioxidants shown to provide benefits against heart disease, stroke, neurological health and osteoporosis to name a few.

The studies abound on the health benefits of drinking tea. What is more remarkable is that of the many varieties of tea, certain types have been shown to have more health benefits than others. All varieties of true tea come from the shrub, *Camilia sinensis*. Depending on how the plant was wilted and oxidized, the varieties

include: black, green (or matcha), oolong, white, yellow and Pu'er. Herbal teas have many health benefits as well. Herbal tea is not a true tea though. It does not contain the plant, *Camelia sinensis*. Herbal teas may contain fruit, stems, roots, bark, flowers, seeds and leaves that make infusions, or tisanes. Tisanes can be consumed for their healing properties as well as their relaxing aromas. With the exception of Yerba Mate, tisanes do not contain caffeine.

Celestial Seasonings in Boulder, Colorado is well known for their herbal teas. The manufacturing plant in Boulder and gift shop can be toured and teas may be sampled all free of charge. The room where the peppermint leaf is stored is recommended for an eye-opening, invigorating experience.

To experience more of an educational, meditative aspect to tea ceremony, Denver Botanical Gardens offers an authentic Japanese Tea Ceremony. The tea ceremony takes place during the summer months at the Tea House in the Japanese Gardens. Early reservations are recommended.



Kirsten Antony is a Registered Nurse and Certified Reflexologist. Kirsten is a holistic health care practitioner and specializes in foot and nail care. She provides care in Denver at a variety of facilities

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