



PHOTO CREDIT: RISHI TEA

CH. V: WHAT IS TEA?

Introduction to Tea

Tea is made from leaves of *Camellia sinensis*, or closely related cousins. There are six unique types of tea, all made from this one plant: Green, Yellow, White, Oolong, Black and Dark (Pu-erh tea). Each type is differentiated by the techniques the farmer uses to develop flavor, most notably, oxidation (allowing the leaf to turn brown)

Camellia sinensis is the botanical name of the tea plant. It is an evergreen that is pruned and cultivated into a bushy shape, making harvest of tender young leaves much easier. If left to grow wild, it will naturally become a tree. Now grown all over the world, *Camellia sinensis* is native to Southeast Asia, an area including China, India, Tibet, Burma (Myanmar), Laos, Bangladesh, Thailand and Vietnam.

There are six unique types of tea, all made from the harvested leaves of this one plant, or its closely related cousins. Each type is differentiated by the techniques the farmer uses to develop flavor, such as firing, rolling, roasting, etc. This is called the production, or the crafting of the tea, and this is what determines how the tea is categorized.

Notes:

What is "Oxidation"?

This word is used a lot to describe tea. It's an enzymatic reaction that happens when tea leaves are rolled and bruised, releasing juices that react to air by turning color. This is similar to a chopped apple turning brown. The level of browning (oxidation) varies from light to very dark. Oxidation is a key step in tea production that distinguishes the types of tea.

LEAST OXIDIZED

Green Tea

unoxidized

Fresh aroma and vegetal flavors. Green teas are fired right after harvest to halt oxidation.



Yellow Tea

very light oxidation
& fermented

Rare, limited production. Very delicate flavor, utilizing techniques of both green and white tea crafting.



White Tea

very light oxidation

Sweet, softly floral. White teas are air dried on bamboo racks. Just barely oxidized, like a wilted flower.



Oolong Tea

light to heavy
oxidation

Diverse flavors, from perfumy floral to honeyed fruit. Some oolongs take days to roll and oxidize.



Black Tea

full oxidation

Ranges from brisk and citrusy to malty and full bodied. Leaves are fully oxidized for complex flavor.



MOST OXIDIZED

Dark

full oxidation

Dark teas, such as Pu-erh, are allowed to age and ferment, yielding smooth and mellow flavors with earthy notes.



Notes:

What About Herbal Tisans?

Herbal tisanes include spices, herbs flowers, and dried fruit that are not derived from *Camellia sinensis*. With the exception of Yerba Maté (a caffeinated herb unrelated to tea), herbal tisans are caffeine-free. Rishi Tea specializes in artisanal herbal blends of vibrant ingredients and global culinary flair.



Notes:
