

## THE STORY OF TEA:

A nice cup of hot tea can't be beat. Its charming, subtle flavor and gentle stimulation make it delightful in any season, at any time of the day.

## I. The origins of tea.

- A. Legend - Many centuries ago, a holy Buddhist made a vow that he would not go to sleep for 9 years. He meant to lose no time in slumber, but to devote 24 hours a day to holy thoughts. But after 3 years he fell into a doze; and when he awoke he was so disgusted with his weakness that he cut off his eyelids to keep them from ever drooping again. When he threw them on the earth, they took root and grew up into a little tree, and the tree was the first tea plant in the world.
- B. First cultivation - 350 A.D. was the first credible record of tea cultivation. An ancient dictionary, written in China, the definition of tea, "a beverage is made from the leaves by boiling." The drink was bitter medicinal extract taken to cure digestive and nervous disorders. Also applied as an external paste to cure rheumatic pains. In 500 A.D., tea was described in another dictionary as a "pleasing beverage."

## C. Spread of tea to the west.

1. Missionaries, explorers, and travelers returned from the Orient in the sixteenth century brought back tales of a slightly bitter beverage - tea. Tea was so rare that for a long time no one but a king or a very rich man could afford to drink a cup of it. Slowly tea grew cheaper and its use spread.
2. Tea reached Germany via Holland about the middle of the seventeenth century. After the first flurry of excitement, the Germans largely ignored the new drink and continued to drink beer.
3. The first public sale of tea in England was in London at a Coffee House in 1657. Tea became quite popular, and the other London coffee houses added it to their menus.
4. Tea reached America in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam around the middle of the seventeenth century. Tea moved north to Massachusetts around 1670 and was licensed for sale in 1690. When New Amsterdam became New York in 1674, tea gardens were built, and tea, coffee, and hot rolls were served at all hours. The role of tea in the War for Independence cut short the growing influence tea was having on colonial America. After the Revolution tea reappeared.

## II. The Plant

- A. The tea plant is a small tree. It is an evergreen and if let alone it may grow 30 feet high. Under cultivation it is restricted by

pruning and plucking to a bushlike plant 2 to 5 feet tall. This enables the pickers to reach every part of the bush. Mature leaves are rather thick, smooth, and leathery. The fragrant flowers consist of 5 white petals.

- B. The best tea comes from plants that are 10 to 15 years old. When they are about 25 years old, they are cut down close to the ground and allowed to grow up anew from the root.

### III. Tea Bags

- A. In 1904, Thomas Sullivan, an enterprising tea and coffee merchant in New York, sent a few samples of his tea to his customers. Such samples usually were sent in small tins. He decided it would be simpler and less expensive to put the tea in little bags instead. So he ordered several hundred little silk, hand-sewn bags, filled them with tea and sent them to his customers.
- B. Orders began to pour in asking for tea packaged in the little bags. Customers had discovered that by pouring boiling water over the bags they could make tea with less effort.

### IV. Brewing tea

- A. To obtain its full flavor and body, bring freshly drawn water to a bubbling boil. Pour the water on the tea leaves in a previously scaled pot, and allow it to remain covered for five minutes. Then strain the tea from the leaves. The leaves should not be used again. One teaspoon of tea for each cup is standard. It may be taken all by itself, or with sugar, cream, or lemon, with cinnamon or various kinds of spices.
- B. In American summers tea is often served with ice. It may appear on the breakfast table, as commonly in England, or at any other meal. It always appears at "afternoon tea" - which in France is called a "five o'clock" and in England is actually a light fourth meal in the day. In Japan there is an elaborate ceremony that goes with taking tea.

### V. Discussion

- A. Have a tea party with different types of teas available to select from.
- B. Have each person bring a tea bag of her favorite tea and you provide the boiling water and cup!