

# COFFEE

A popular beverage all over the world, coffee has been imported into Britain for the past 300 years. It is derived from the berries of the coffee tree which is grown in a number of tropical countries. As they ripen, the berries turn first green, then red to reddish-black. Coffee beans are extracted from bright red berries, each of which contains two small oval green seeds encased in a fine silvery skin which is protected by a tough outer husk.

Once the seeds are ripe, they are picked and the red pulp is removed. They then undergo a wet or dry process to remove all traces of the pulp, are dried in the sun and finally have the skins removed by machine. After this, the beans are graded accordingly to size and quality.

The flavour of coffee beans varies enormously, depending on climate, soil, picking, processing, storing and transport. The buyers of the beans and, where appropriate, the blenders, are the people who aim for consistency of taste, particularly if the beans are destined to become instant coffee. The best, most finely flavoured varieties are known as "ARABICAS" and grow at altitudes of 2000 to 6500 feet above sea level. "ROBUSTA" varieties are coarser, with a proper flavour, and grow between sea level and 2000 feet.

## BUYING COFFEE

You can buy green beans and roast them yourself either in the oven or in a special electric roaster, but it is more reliable to buy them ready-roasted in small quantities from a specialist coffee merchant, good grocer or supermarket. For best flavour, the beans should be freshly roasted and used within a few days, at most a week. If you do not have regular access to a good supplier, buy larger quantities periodically and store them in the freezer. The beans will keep for six months frozen without virtually no loss of flavour.

Coffee is also sold ready ground in vacuum sealed containers which often specify the method which should be used for making the coffee (e.g. Filter). Instant coffees come in powder or freeze-dried granule form, the latter being better flavoured and more expensive. There is also coffee essence (usually mixed with chicory) which has a sweet flavour. The essence is best used in cooking or for making quick iced coffee.

All coffee beans naturally contain caffeine but, for those who want to avoid this, decaffeinated coffee is available in beans, ground and instant forms, with only marginal loss of flavour.

## TYPES OF COFFEE

The subtle variations of flavour of individual coffee are endless. It is worth trying them separately and in a blend until you find the one you like best. Among the types of coffee available are:

1. BRAZILIAN - The flavour is very smooth and mild and has no bitterness or acidity
2. CHAGGA - Chagga coffee is produced by the Wa-Chagga tribe living on the slopes of mount Kilimanzaro in Tanzania. The beans are picked and washed in the mountain streams from the Kibo glacier and dried in the mountain air. This is a full bodied and usually medium to dark roast.
3. COLOMBIAN - Colombian coffee is from south America and has a smooth, strong flavour with very little acidity.
4. CONTINENTAL BLEND - A blend of dark roasted coffees with a strong flavour. Popular for drinking at breakfast.
5. JAVA - A mature coffee from the East Indies with a subtle mellow flavour. It is most suitable for drinking 'black' (without milk or cream) as an after-dinner coffee.

- 6. KENYA - A very aromatic coffee with a pleasant sharpness. At its best when served 'black' as an after-dinner coffee.
- 7. MOCHA - Mocha is the traditional Turkish coffee. The flavour, traditionally described as 'Gamey', is strong and subtle.
- 8. MYSORE - This coffee is a rich, full flavoured coffee from Southern India.
- 9. VIENNA - This coffee is often sold already blended to give a smooth, subtly strong flavour.

The best way to discover which kinds of coffee you like best is to talk to a specialist coffee merchant and to buy small quantities of different types to try.

## MAKING COFFEE

If you buy coffee beans you need a coffee grinder, either electric or manual. You may also need special equipment for making the coffee unless you use the time-honoured method of pouring boiling water on to grounds in a jug, then straining.

Electric filter coffee machines work by heating the water and then pouring it through ground coffee in a filter into a glass jug on a heated plate. You can also buy plastic filter cones for use with filter papers on jugs, but this does not keep the coffee hot.

Espresso machines work by forcing water through coffee grounds under pressure. They may be electric or for use on a hob.

Other methods include the cafetiere (a heat proof glass jug with a fine wire mesh plunger which is used to push the coffee grounds to the bottom before serving the coffee), glass vacuum machines (cona), drip pots and electric percolators. For authentic Turkish and Greek coffee you need a special small, long - handled pan ( known as 'Ibrik') which is wider at the bottom than the top.

## COFFEE GRINDING GRADES

The various methods for making coffee work best if the grade of ground coffee is used. The most suitable grinds for some common methods of brewing coffee are as follows :

METHODS	GRINDING GRADE
FILTER / DRIP	FINE TO MEDIUM
JUG	COARSE
TURKISH	FINE
CAFETIERE (PLUNGER)	MEDIUM
GLASS BALLOON / VACUUM (CONA)	MEDIUM FINE / FINE
ESPRESSO	VERY FINE
PERCOLATOR	MEDIUM / COARSE

## SERVING METHODS

Allow 50gms coffee per 600ml (1 pint) water. Coffee may be drunk black (without milk) or white with the addition of milk - allow one part hot milk to two parts coffee - or cream. Some people like to sweeten their coffee with sugar or honey, and some add alcohol. Coffee should be served hot but not boiling and should not be kept hot for too long after making or the flavour will be spoiled.

Iced coffee is also a popular way to drink coffee. Hot strong black coffee is sweetened with sugar and left to chill, and then poured over ice cubes in a glass and topped with whipped cream.

Cappuccino is an Italian version of coffee made by adding frothy cream or milk to strong black coffee. It

is often served with a sprinkling of powdered chocolate on top. Turkish coffee is served strong and black, flavoured with cardamom.

## LIQUEUR COFFEE

Coffee served with alcohol added is known as liqueur coffee. The most famous of these is Irish or Gaelic coffee which is made by adding one part Irish whisky to 3 or 4 parts very strong coffee, sweetened with sugar and topped with double cream. The cream is carefully poured over the back of a spoon on to the surface of the coffee so that it stays in a thick layer on top. Liqueur coffee is usually served in a glass.

Other popular liqueur coffee include Cointreau coffee, Caribbean coffee (made with rum), German coffee (made with Kirsch), Normandy coffee (made with Calvados), Russian coffee (made with Vodka), Calypso coffee (made with Tia Maria), Witch's coffee (made with Stregga and topped with a little grated lemon rind) and Curacao coffee (made with Curacao and stirred with stick of cinnamon).

## COOKING WITH COFFEE

Coffee is frequently used as a flavouring for ice-creams, desserts, cakes and biscuits, sometimes combined with chocolate to produce a "Mocha flavour". At one time, coffee essence was usually used to flavour a dish, but many recipes now use instant coffee dissolved in a little water.

## COFFEE SUBSTITUTES

In recent years, concern has been expressed about the amount of coffee drunk by some people, particularly in relation to its caffeine content. Some varieties of instant coffee contain a substance produced from chicory root, which blends with the coffee and reduces the amount of caffeine each cup contains. Although this alters the flavour, many people have come to prefer a blend of coffee and chicory.

Decaffeinated coffee is widely available, and various coffee substitutes exist, including a drink made from roasted barley and other made from dandelion root and called 'dandelion coffee'. Although these substitutes do not taste very much like coffee, they are a useful alternative for those who prefer not to drink real coffee.

# TEA

Tea is the leaf of a tropical evergreen shrub, 'Camellia Sinensis', whose dried leaves are used to make an infusion with boiling water. The plant has sweet-smelling white flowers and leaves similar to bay leaves. It is grown all round the world in regions with a warm tropical climate and good rainfall, particularly China, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Japan.

While tea has been drunk by the Chinese for centuries, it was only brought to Europe in the 17th century by the Dutch traders. It was known as 'CHA' from the Cantonese word for tea "CH'A". Even today it is still referred to as a 'cup of CHA'. By the end of 17th century the drink was known as 'TAY' or 'TEE' from the Cantonese amoy word TAY for TEA.

The flavour of tea depends on the variety, on the soil and climate. For black tea, the most popular type is the leaves are wilted, then bruised by rolling to mix the chemical components of the leaf together. During rolling, the colour, flavour and astringency of the tea begins to develop. The leaves are then left in contact with air to ferment so that they are oxidised, developing a red-brown colour. They are then dried, turning black in the process. For green tea, the leaf is steamed and dried without being allowed to ferment. This preserves the green colour and yields a tea with an astringent taste. For brown (Oolong) tea, the leaves are partially fermented before drying.

There are three main grades of tea, but these are not classified according to quality but to the size of the leaves :- leaf tea takes the longest to release its flavour; tea made from broken leaves makes a strong, quick brewing infusion; smaller leaf tea, also known as 'dust', is usually blended with other leaves.

A good infusion of tea, properly made, contains little tannin, but tea that has been standing a long time will contain an excessive amount of tannin which can be harmful if drunk in large quantities.

To enjoy tea, at its best, use freshly drawn cold water (hot or reheated water has a flat, stale taste). Warm the pot and add the tea. The quantity varies according to the type and blend - more is required with China tea than with Indian, for example ; on average amount is 10ml (2 teaspoon) tea to 450ml - (3/4th pint) water. Make the tea as soon as the kettle boils or the water will go flat and spoil the taste of the brew. Take the hot tea pot to the kettle and pour the boiling water on the leaves, then cover the pot to keep it warm. Allow the infusion to stand for 3minutes in the case of ordinary Indian teas, 5 - 6minutes for China or high grade Indian tea.

Tea should be served really hot. Milk is usually served with black tea, but lemon can be offered as an alternative.

## TYPES OF TEA

1. Green Tea - It is the original tea. The leaves are picked, withered on racks and steamed to stop oxidisation / fermentation. They produce a weak brew which is best drunk on its own or with lemon.
2. Oolong Tea - It is semi-fermented; after withering, the leaves are slightly crushed and half fermented before being dried. This process produces a brown tea with delicate flavour.
3. Black Tea - It is the most popular type sold in Britain. The leaves are fermented until they are dark brown and then dried.
4. Smoked Tea - It is produced in much smaller quantities. A few teas are given a distinctive, slightly, tarry flavour by being dried over smoke.

Indian, Ceylon and African teas are sold black and usually blended and sold under brand names whose flavour and quality are consistent. Most popular brand teas are a blend of different types. The best tea are those sold under their own names. The following is a list of some of the most readily available ----

1. Assam Tea - Strong tea with a rich malty flavour. It is often blended with other teas.
2. Ceylon Tea - Although Ceylon is now called Sri-Lanka, the tea has not been renamed. A light flavoursome tea with a slightly lemony or astringent taste.
3. Darjeeling - Indian high grown tea with a brisk flavour. Often known as the 'Champagne of Tea'.
4. Earl Grey - A tea flavoured with oil of bergamot. It is best drunk without milk.
5. English Breakfast - Two different types : originally a fragrant blend of China tea, now usually a stronger blend of Ceylon and Assam tea.
6. Formosa Oolong - A delicate semi-fermented tea with a peachy flavour. The only Oolong tea to be found in the west.
7. Gunpowder - Top quality green tea which gets its name from its metallic grey sheen.
8. Jasmine - Green or black tea or a mixture, with jasmine flowers. Goes well with Chinese food and is best without milk or sugar.
9. Keemun - Considered the best China tea. As an aromatic flavour strong enough to be drunk with milk.
10. Lapsang Souchong - A pungent China tea with a smoked flavour.
11. Lemon Tea - Usually a black tea mixed with lemon peel and scented with lemon oils. Can be served hot or cold without milk.
12. Nilgiris - A bright black tea from India.

## TEA SUBSTITUTES

'Tea' or 'Tisanes' can be made from a variety of herbs and other plants to drink as a substitute for tea. Herbal teas have become very popular in recent years, although the practice of drinking such infusions is very old, particularly as they have long been thought to have therapeutic extracts.

Herbal tea can be made from dried or fresh herbs. It is possible to buy 'tea' bags containing dried herbs which can be conveniently be put in a cup, filled with boiling water and left to infuse. Herbs that can be used to make herbal teas include Camomile, Comfrey, Fennel, Lemon, Verbena and Mint. Mu tea is a micro-biotic tea made form a combination of natural herbs. Other leaves that can be used are nettle, raspberry leaves, vervain or colts foot. The variety of fruits can also be used, including rose hips.

Other 'teas' that are also available, mostly from health food shops as Bancha tea (a macro-boitic green tea that is low in tannin), Luaka tea (a black tea from Sri-Lanka, also low in tannin) and twig (Kukicha) tea, which is made from the same plant as Bancha tea, but uses the twigs instead of the leaves.