

Jay's Teas Unveiled...

Welcome to the wonderful world of herbal tea, where your creativity will flourish amidst an array of herbs and spices! There are over one hundred different herbs and spices which may be used in herbal teas, but we've only included 12 to start with. Given these 12 ingredients, there are 220 unique combinations if 3 ingredients are used in each tea. Sound overwhelming? No worries, we'll offer some suggestions.

The four ingredients (lemon grass, chamomile, licorice, peppermint) should be used as bases - the first ingredient and dominant flavor. The other eight ingredients (orange and lemon peel, cinnamon, catnip, fennel seed, fenugreek, cloves, cardamom) are meant to compliment the base and other ingredients.

Flavor descriptions:

Licorice: very sweet and full-bodied

Lemon Grass: light fruity flavor with hints of orange/lemon

Chamomile: slightly bitter with a subtle apple flavor

Peppermint: refreshing and minty

Cinnamon: pungent, warming and sweet

Catnip: light and minty

Cloves: strong sweet, warming

Fenugreek: lightly smoky and nutty

Fennel seed: mildly sweet, licorice-like

Lemon peel: lemony

Orange peel: orangey

Cardamom: very pungent, warm

Tea Suggestions: (most → least amount)

Summertime Soother (iced):

Peppermint, catnip

Winter Warmer:

Licorice, orange peel, cinnamon, cloves

Thai Tickler:

Lemon grass, lemon and orange peel, cardamom

Easy-to-bed:

Chamomile, fennel seed, fenugreek

Indian Spice:

Licorice, cinnamon, clove, fennel seed, fenugreek, cardamom

Herbal Tea Brewing Tips

Basic:

1. Boil water in pot or tea kettle. 2. Turn off burner, wait until boiling stops. 3. Add ingredients, stir lightly and cover. 4. Filter. 5. Serve and enjoy!

More Specific: (in no exact order)

- Home-brewed teas made from bulk herbs and spices are superior in freshness and flavor to that made with teabags.

- In general, it is not good to boil your tea, it should be simmered or immersed in sub-boiling water, (depending on the ingredients) when steeping.

- While brewing, tea should covered...this helps to keep the vigor of the tea inside.

- Roots (e.g, licorice, cinnamon) and seeds (e.g., cloves, fenugreek, fennel) should be brewed longer (10-20 min) and most can handle a light boil without a decay of flavor.

- Leafy herbs (e.g., peppermint, catnip, lemon grass, chamomile) should be brewed quickly (4-6min) in water that's just below boiling. If you boil them, their flavor will decay.

- Upon addition of herbs/spices (especially leafy herbs) to water, stir slightly (once or twice) so water most efficiently absorbs the herb's/spice's flavor.

- Depending on your desired flavors, you may need to add various ingredients at different times of the brewing process.

- Tea strength will depend on how much stuff you add and the freshness of herb/spices. I find that ~1-2 Tablespoons of base ingredient per ~4-6 cups of water is adequate, but this will vary. Experiment and see what you like.

- Iced teas are great for the summer, but don't think that your favorite hot tea will taste the same cold - temperature affects taste tremendously. Lighter (leafy, fruity) and refreshing ingredients such as peppermint make great iced teas. Adding a little sweetener and lemon is always a nice touch.

- When making iced teas, you can either brew the ingredients in cold water kept in the fridge for ~day or brew them strong (double the ingredients you'd use for hot tea) and hot (as given above) and then cool with ice/cold water.

- Smell your tea. You should be able to tell how your tea's doing by its smell. A good tea smells good.

- Root and seed teas keep their flavor longer than most leafy teas (exceptions include chamomile), and are therefore generally better to have with a dinner party.

- Experiment, experiment, experiment...but write down the very good ones!

Your Loving Tea Master,
Jay