

The Sixth Cup of Tea

Tea Culture

Tea lovers across the globe are united by more than the beverage itself; tea drinking has become an integral part of their culture. A cup of tea welcomes guests, fosters friendly gatherings, and, in some places, serves as a vital source of energy or even a measure of time.

China

Unlike Japanese tea ceremonies, the Chinese tea ritual is less formal yet follows certain steps to provide guests with relaxation, respite and a connection to nature. Tea leaves are typically steeped multiple times in a small teapot, producing what is known as "multi-steeped" tea. This ritual is also part of traditional Chinese weddings.

Japan

Since the beginning of tea cultivation in Japan, a unique tea culture has blossomed, gradually transforming into the refined ceremony we recognize today. Although this tea ceremony isn't practiced at home, the powdered green tea known as *matcha*, central to the ritual, has become widely popular, flavouring everything from ice cream to sweets, noodles and even sushi.

Turkey

In Turkey, tea is enjoyed throughout the day as part of relaxation and conversations. The famous Rize tea is grown near the city of the same name and prepared in a dual-pot setup, where the leaves steam in the upper pot while water boils in the lower one. This process enhances the aroma, and the tea, poured into iconic tulip-shaped glasses, is typically brewed two or three times.

India

For traditional tea enthusiasts, India's chai-making approach may seem unconventional. Chai is a slowly simmered black tea brewed with milk, spices and sweetener. A *chai wallah* custom-blends spices typical to each locality, often including cinnamon, ginger, anise, cardamom, fennel, pepper, cloves and nutmeg. Sweetened with honey or palm sugar, the tea is usually Assam black tea. Tea is prepared similarly in Sri Lanka.

Morocco

Moroccans are passionate about their highly sweetened green tea, known as Tuareg, which is made with Chinese Gunpowder tea and mint. Often served in cafés, this tea is poured into

glasses on decorative copper trays. In traditional homes, it's enjoyed while seated on a carpet, usually prepared by the eldest male in the family.

Tibet

The Tibetan method of tea preparation is among the oldest ways of processing tea leaves, offering not only a beverage but also a hearty source of sustenance. Essential for daily life in harsh mountainous regions, this tea provides energy and warmth. The process begins with a strong infusion of black tea, brewed over several days. The brew is then strained, salted and mixed with soda and yak butter, often slightly rancid. Thick, warm and nourishing, this tea helps maintain body heat and aids digestion of the meat that locals consume nearly three times a day. A similar preparation is also enjoyed in Mongolia for the same reasons.

Russia

Russians prepare an especially strong black tea using a samovar, which serves as both a kettle and a teapot. Tea is poured from a concentrated brew, and each person adds hot water from the samovar's spout to adjust the strength to their liking. They may also customize their tea with milk, cream, lemon juice, candied fruit, jam, or fruit preserves for added flavour.

United Kingdom

Outside of Asia, Britain is perhaps the most devoted tea-drinking country. The tradition of "tea at five" has spread globally, along with the British custom of adding milk. Some say this practice cools the tea to prevent delicate china from cracking, softens the bitter taste of lower-quality tea, or simply makes the tea go further.

Czechia

Although the tradition of drinking tea is relatively young in Czechia, it is ranked among the top European countries in tea consumption per capita. In the 1990s, an unprecedented boom in teahouses began, a phenomenon unique in countries that have adopted tea culture from abroad. In these teahouses, one can experience both traditional, high-quality tea preparation and a wide selection of teas from around the world.