

Tea Talk

*By Joyce A. Whitaker, owner of
The Painted Lady Tea Room*

Often we have guests to the tea room that profess “I don’t like tea or I never acquired a taste for tea.” This comment is followed by my question, how many teas have you tried? There are thousands of tea flavors and even more when you consider tisanes (fruit and herbal blends). I truly believe that if you are really interested in drinking tea and enjoying the ceremony and health benefits of doing so, keep trying new flavors. There has to be one you will like.

Tea is separated into several categories that will give you some idea of which ones you might like. Each week we will address one:

Black Tea

Black teas were first created during the 16th century to permit the long overseas journey of the tea from China to the West. Green teas, the variety enjoyed in Asia, were too delicate to survive the year-long trip. Therefore, most tea drinkers in the West, are more familiar with black teas than any other.

Earl grey is the most popular black tea enjoyed by Americans because it is infused with the distinct flavor of oil of bergamot.

English breakfast is second because the blend is a premium grade Keemun, which is rich and flavorful.

Irish Breakfast is a tasty blend of high-grown Ceylon and hearty Assam teas. (Do you know that Ireland consumes more tea than any other country?)

Other black teas include Ceylon, wonderful for afternoon tea, Assam, a

hearty, malty taste popular as a morning tea, Darjeeling, a rich, full-flavored tea grown in the Himalayas, Yunnan, robust, peppery flavor, Keemun, boasts an aromatic bouquet and even the exotic tea Lapsang Souchong, which has a smoky flavor that is reminiscent of campfires along old caravan trails.

We simply cannot address all the black teas available, but we have covered the most popular ones today.

No matter which tea you choose, serving a plate of sweet confections will make the process a special ceremony. The following recipe is a favorite.

Melt Away Moments

(makes 5 dozen cookies)

1 cup (2 sticks) butter, softened
¾ cup sugar
1 cup (or more) all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon each baking powder and vinegar
whole almonds

Cream the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl until light and fluffy. Mix in the flour, baking powder and vinegar. You may add a little more flour if the dough is too sticky. Drop by the teaspoonful onto a lightly greased cookie sheet. Lightly press a whole almond into the center of each cookie. Bake at 325 degrees for 15-18 minutes. Cool on a wire rack.

Perfect when served with a beautiful dessert compote filled with fresh berries of the season topped with whipped cream.

Note: Joyce will answer your tea questions through this column. Contact her by Email: [jwhitaker @A-TEA-ROOM.com](mailto:jwhitaker@A-TEA-ROOM.com) or stop by the Painted Lady. 7/20/04

