

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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What is Tea to Me, or You?

In the grips of another sweltering summer, many Floridians seek refuge from the heat with a refreshing glass of iced tea. But we aren't the only ones who enjoy this popular beverage. Across the country and around the world tea has made its way to the front of the beverage market. Store shelves are full of teas featuring a variety of colors and flavors in their names: green, white, red, pomegranate, peach and more.

When talking tea, words like herbal, antioxidant, and EGCG are often thrown about for consumers to digest. The question is, do tea drinkers really receive more than sweet relief from blistering temperatures with this beverage of choice? Let's take a closer look at the history, varieties, and health claims surrounding tea.

While downing those first cooling gulps of iced tea, few individuals realize they are enjoying one of the oldest and most widely consumed beverages in the world. For thousands of years, people of various regions, cultures, and religious beliefs have drunk teas as part of ceremonial, meditative, and social practices. In American history, tea's biggest splash occurred in 1773 when protestors dumped three shiploads of taxed tea into the Boston Harbor in an act of defiance to the British government. It is doubtful our ancestors would believe the countless types of tea that would be available to us today.

Green, black, white, and oolong are just a few examples of the products available to the tea-thirsty customer. Did you know the dried leaves of the same plant, *Camellia sinensis*, is responsible for all these teas? The growing region, form, and processing method of the tea leaves determine the color, potency, and flavor of the finished product. Adding flavors like blueberry, cranberry-pomegranate, spiced apple, chamomile, and herbals also provides variety to the basic tea brew. But, other than a flavorful break from the sun, what else can tea provide?

Research conducted in both rodents and humans suggests that drinking green tea especially may have positive health benefits, including decreasing risk of cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic inflammatory, and other lifestyle diseases, like obesity. These effects are largely attributed to the powerful antioxidant EGCG (Epigallocatechin Gallate). It acts to reduce damage-causing processes in the body. However, the conclusion from the National Institutes of Health is that the scientific evidence to support the use of green tea is not clear. There are claims, but not much proof of help for a variety of conditions including anxiety, arthritis, asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disease, common cold, dental caries, diabetes, fertility, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, high blood fats, menopausal symptoms, mental performance, protection from UV-rays, viral infection, and weight loss. Furthermore, green tea contains caffeine and thus should be used with caution in those who are sensitive to it.

From floating in the harbor to flooding the grocery shelves, the evolution of tea in America provides consumers with a multitude of choices when it comes to

this popular drink. Be wary of bottled, fountain, and restaurant teas sweetened with lots of sugar - - a sneaky source of excess calories. Save money - buy a box of tea bags from the store and brew your own pitchers at home, where you are in control of the type and amount of sweetener added to the drink. While a nice refreshing glass of iced tea certainly goes a long way in relaxing in the heat, sometimes there's nothing like an afternoon frozen dessert. Here's a recipe that the whole family can enjoy. In fact, make it a fun creation with kids on a hot day.

Green Tea Mango Splash!

1 fresh pineapple –	1 ¼ tsp chopped fresh ginger
peeled, cored, and cut into chunks	1 cup brewed green tea, chilled
2 large green apples, washed and sliced	1 cup mango sorbet

Juice pineapple, apples, and ginger in a juice machine. Combine juice with chilled green tea. Stir in mango sorbet. Pour into chilled glasses and enjoy!

Serves 4.

If you don't have a juice machine, you can still make this yummy drink by substituting 1 cup of pineapple juice and 1 cup of apple juice instead of the whole fruit. You'll still enjoy the flavor, but you'll be missing out on some of the vitamins and all of the fiber the whole fruit can provide.