

What is the best way to steep tea?

Tea is a simple beverage requiring only hot water and tea leaf. However how you prepare the tea can dramatically change the overall flavor, aroma, texture and appeal of the final product. Here we will review some of the basics that you will want to keep in mind for preparing tea for either personal or professional applications.

1. Tea. The quality and appeal of a cup of tea starts with the tea leaf itself. Tea comes in a wide variety of different leaf sizes and shapes. The various degrees of oxidation helps us to determine the proper class of tea (white, green, oolong, black, puerh). In addition we broadly classify teas in terms of either orthodox (whole leaf) or CTC (crush, tear, curl). Professionally, we standardize on 2.0 - 2.5 grams / 6 oz liquid.

2. Water. For the highest quality teas we recommends fresh spring water. If you live in a municipality with water of high mineral content, you might consider purchasing a good quality water filter to remove the dissolved minerals.

3. Temperature. The temperature of the water influences the rate at which the liquor develops its flavor. In general you will want to use water of a lower temperature (~180 F) for green and white teas and a higher temperature (> ~200 F) for oolongs, blacks, and puerh teas. Use this as a general guide in particular for the green and oolong teas which are often can differ more dramatically in their sensitivity to temperature.

4. Steeping time. Time is a critical factor in the final characteristics of a good quality cup of tea. For personal consumption, one does not need a stopwatch for every cup, but certainly for professional comparative tasting, a timer is essential. In general start with 2 - 3 minutes to steep and adjust as desired. Chais and puerh teas can certainly steep for longer than even 5 minutes. The shape and freshness of the tea will also impact the ideal steeping time.

5. Tasting cup. Professionals in the industry use a standard, cylindrical tasting cup with lid. The lid, when inverted with the steeped leaves, forms a nice presentation for the expert taster. The professional tasting bowl is white, making the liquor more discernable. If you are preparing a cup or tea pot for personal consumption, it is best to select a vessle that best suits your mood. Functionally, it should have a lid and infusing basket to removed the steeped leaves after the desired time.