

Tea Association of the United States - Industry Definitions

Assam: A black tea grown in the Northeast section of India. A strong full-bodied tea with a rich robust flavor. Considered by many tea lovers to be a wake-up tea to be consumed in the morning. Often used in blends because of its strong taste.

Aroma: An important consideration in cupping teas is the smell which is given off. A favorable aroma is most often associated with a flavorful taste.

Astringent: A tea tasting term which describes a liquor which is pungent but inclined to be acidic.

Autumnal: Describes the liquor from teas grown in Autumn, in cool weather. The term is most often applied to teas from Northern India.

Black Tea: The most commonly consumed tea in the world accounting for approximately 80% of all consumption. In the United States well over 90% of the tea consumed is black. One of three major types of tea, the others being Green and Oolong. Black teas are the most processed of all teas in that they are oxidized or fermented.

Baggy: Describes an undesirable taint sometimes found in teas withered on inferior hessian or stored in sacks.

Bakey: An unpleasant characteristic noticeable in the liquors of teas which have been subjected to higher than desirable temperatures during processing.

Bancha: A Japanese tea made from coarse leaves, usually from the last plucking. This tea is generally consumed domestically.

Biscuity: A desirable trait usually referring to a well fired Assam.

Bite: A very brisk and "alive" tea liquor. A desirable trait.

Blend:	A mixture of teas from several different origins to achieve a certain flavor profile. Most branded teas in the United States use 20 or more origins to achieve their desired taste.
Body:	Describes a tea liquor possessing fullness and strength.
Bright:	A lively tea, usually with a red liquor.
Brisk:	Describes a live taste as opposed to flat or soft.
Broken Orange Pekoe:	A size of tea leaf comprising the smaller leaves and tips.
Burnt:	A degree worse than bakey.

Caffeine:	A component of tea which stimulates the nervous system. A cup of tea averages 40 milligrams of caffeine versus approximately 110 in a cup of coffee.
Ceylon Tea:	The common name of teas grown in Sri Lanka.
Ceylon Breakfast:	A blend of fine teas grown on the hillsides of Sri Lanka producing a rich golden liquor with superb flavor.
Chai:	A blend of black tea with various spices and steamed milk as commonly drunk in India.
Chest:	Traditional way of packaging bulk teas. Usually made of wood with an aluminum lining.
Chesty:	Tea which has been contaminated by improperly seasoned or inferior chest panels.
China Oolong:	A select blend of large leaf teas from China.
Common:	Describes the liquor of inferior tea having little character.
Chop:	From the Hindi; means to stamp. A chop of tea means a certain number of chests all carrying the same brand.

Coppery: Refers to color of the tea liquor, like a new penny. A good trait resulting from good manufacturing processes.

Creaming Down: A high quality tea which turns cloudy generally believed to be caused by the precipitation of tannins.

Croppy: Describes a bright, strong creamy liquor with distinctive character. Usually found in some second flush Assams and Dooars of Orthodox manufacture.

Darjeeling: A very high quality black tea grown in the Himalayan Mountains in Northern India. Called the champagne of teas.

Dooar: Tea grown in the Dooar district located in Central India.

Dull: Tea liquor which is not clear or bright.

Dust: A term which has been used to describe the smallest particles of tea leaf.

Earthy: An unfavorable characteristic generally caused by storing tea under damp conditions.

English Breakfast: Traditionally a blend of China Keemums. today the blend has evolved to include Ceylon and India teas to produce a full bodied brew.

Estate: A term used to describe a plantation or garden where tea is grown.

Fannings: A very small size of tea leaf, although larger than dust.

Fermentation: A term used to describe the processing of Oolong and Black teas. The actual chemical transformation which takes place is actually oxidation.

Fibrous: A term used to identify pieces of stem in tea.

Fine:	Teas of exceptional quality and flavor.
Flavour:	Very characteristic taste and aroma of fine teas, usually associated with high grown teas.
Flowery Orange Pekoe:	A large leaf size containing an abundance of tip.
Flush:	The new growth on a tea plant consisting of a full complement of leaves. It takes about 40 days for a new bud to blossom into a flush.
Formosa:	Tea grown on the island of Taiwan.
Full:	A strong tea with good color and no bitterness.
Fully-fired:	Referring to a taste of the liquor equated with being slightly over fired.

Garden:	Refers to a plantation or estate where tea is grown.
Golden Tip:	A desirable feature resulting from good harvesting practices.
Gone off:	Tea which is not good because it is old, mouldy, or otherwise tainted.
Grainy:	Refers to well-made fannings and dust.
Green:	Describes an unpleasant astringency which may be due to inadequate withering or fermentation.
Green tea:	Tea which undergoes minimal processing and most resembles the original green leaf.
Gunpowder:	A type of Green tea which has been rolled into pellets.
Gyokuro:	A prized Japanese Green Tea which is rich to the taste and pleasing to the eye. The tea undergoes special handling at every stage of its growth (shaded) and processing (hand-fired).

Hard:	A desirable quality suggesting pungency, particularly applied to Assam teas.
Harsh:	Refers to a tea which is bitter which could result from picking (plucking) tea before it is ready.
Heavy:	A tea which is not brisk and overly strong.
High-fired:	A tea that has remained in a dryer for a longer period than necessary, but not considered to be burnt.
Hungry:	Describes the liquor of a tea which is lacking in cup quality.
Hyson, Young Hys:	A Chinese Green Tea named for the East India merchant who first sold it in England. Young Hyson is generally preferred to Hyson.

I-Chiban Cha:	A Japanese term referring to the first flush or first plucking of tea. It is generally a very delicate tasting tea.
Imperial Tea:	A rolled Green Tea from Ceylon, China, or India made from older leaves. It has a good aroma and is refreshing.
Instant Tea:	Developed in the 1930's and commercialized in the 50's, instant tea sacrifices nuances in fragrance and flavor for convenience.

Jasmine:	The Chinese use Green Tea as the base to which Jasmine flowers are used to scent the tea. The finest Chinese Jasmine is called Yin Hao and Chun Hao. Formosa Jasmynes use Pouchong tea as a base. Pouchong is allowed to wither for a longer period of time (than Green) before it is fired which places it between Green and Oolong.
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Keemun:	A fine grade of Black Tea from China. It has a dark amber color and unique "sappy liquor.
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Lapsang Soucho: A fine grade of China Black tea with a distinctive smoky flavor which results from a unique drying process. Tea drinkers either love or hate the taste of this unusual tea.

Light: Describes a liquor which is rather thin and lacking depth of color but which may be flavory or pungent or both.

Lot: Describes all of the teas offered under a single mark or serial number at any tea auction.

Metallic: An undesirable trait which imparts a metallic taste.

Mouldy: An undesirable trait characterized by a mouldy taste and odor resulting from improper storage.

Muddy: A term which describes a dull or lifeless liquor.

Muscatel: Describes a characteristic reminiscent of grapes. Also describes an exceptional characteristic found in the liquors of the finest second flush Darjeelings.

Mushy: A tea which may have been packed too moist.

Musty; Fusty: A tea liquor in which there is suspicion of mold.

New: Describes a tea which has not had adequate time to mellow.

Nose: A term used to connote a good aroma of tea.

Old: Describes liquor from tea which has lost through age those attributes which it possessed originally.

Oolong: Partially "fermented" tea which is allowed to wither, then is partially oxidized and dried. The term is of Chinese origins and means Black Dragon.

Orange Pekoe: Is used to identify a large leaf size. The tea is characterized by long, thin, wiry leaves which sometimes contain the white or yellow tip of the leaf bud.

Organoleptic: The process used by most tea tasters to evaluate the quality of a tea using all the senses.

Pan-fired: A Japanese tea which is steamed and then rolled in iron pans to halt further oxidation.

Pekoe: A size of tea leaf characterized by leaves which are shorter and not as wiry as Orange Pekoe. The liquors generally have more color.

Pekoe Souchong: A tea which may have been packed too moist.

Pingsuey: In Chinese, the term means ice water. A Black Tea from the Hangchow district of Zhejiang Province. An excellent mild tasting tea.

Plain: Describes teas which are clean and innocuous but lacking character.

Point; pointy: A most desirable brisk pungent characteristic.

Pouchong: Some of the finest quality and high priced teas. A very fragrant tea which is also used as a base for making Jasmine Tea.

PU-Er / PU-Erh: Technically classified not as black but dark black tea, the best of which is aged for decades before use. The base may be green tea or black, and its tastes and aromas can range from earthy to elegant. In China it has been customarily drunk with or after meals as a digestif.

Pungent: Describes a tea liquor having marked briskness and an astringent effect on the palate without bitterness.

Quality: Describes a preponderance of desirable attributes which are the essential characteristics of a good tea.

Rains; rainy: Describes liquor of a dull plain tea manufactured during the rainy season.

Red Tea: **Background:**
The term “Red Tea” has always been confusing to both the tea trade as well as consumers. The situation has worsened today as a result of the introduction of a South African Herbal plant called Rooibos or Red Bush from which an herbal tea is made. The purpose of this Position Paper is to provide a guideline for both the trade and consumers to help distinguish between traditional tea, from *Camellia sinensis* and Rooibos Herbal tea.

Early Definition:

Beginning in the 16th Century and extending to the beginning of the 20th Century, the term “Red Tea” was used by Chinese tea merchants as their name for what the rest of the world would call Black Tea. Today, the term is still used in China, but much less commonly.

In its original form, it described a fully fermented / oxidized tea and it was (is) subsequently used to describe both fully fermented and semi-fermented teas by some members of the Trade.

Current Usage:

Today, several packers of Rooibos have begun labeling their tea as Red Tea. Used alone without any qualification, this can be misleading to consumers who think they are consuming traditional tea so that they may benefit from the much publicized health benefits associated with that product. While Rooibos Tea may also contain health benefits, the body of research supporting claims for Rooibos is tiny in comparison to the volumes of scientific evidence published about the health benefits of *Camellia sinensis*.

To avoid this potential for confusion, The Tea Association of the USA has approved the following guideline for dissemination to the traditional and herbal tea industries:

Red Tea Guideline:

When using the term “Red Tea” to describe a product derived from the Rooibos or Red Bush plant, the term should be qualified by stating that it contains Rooibus Herbal Tea. When using the term “Red Tea” to describe a traditional Black Tea or Oolong Tea, the term should be so qualified through the use of these descriptors.

While an element of confusion continues to exist, the appropriate use of these modifiers should minimize it.

Rich:	A mellow liquor which is abounding in quality and thickness.
Roughness:	A term used to connote harshness.
Russian Carava:	A blend of China Black Teas. Although there is little consistency between available blends in the marketplace.
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Sappy:	Describes a tea liquor which has a full juicy flavor.
Scented tea:	These are teas which, after processing are put in close proximity with various flowers or spices under controlled temperature and humidity conditions for periods of about 4 hours and then refired.
Self-drinking:	Describes an original tea which is palatable in itself and does not necessarily require blending before being consumed by the public.
Sencha:	These are teas which Japan exports and comprise about 75% of Japan's total production.
Silver Tip Pekoe:	A very costly tea from China made from full-grown buds of a special tea bush. This is also referred to as White Tea.
Silvery Oolong:	Another costly tea which utilizes the delicate whitish leaf from the first flush.
Smokey:	This term describes an odor or taste of smoke, often caused by a defect in the drier.
Soft:	A tea which is under fermented or oxidized.
Sour:	This describes an undesirable acid odor and taste.
Spicy:	A liquor having character, suggestive of cinnamon or cloves. This is sometimes, but not always, the effect of contamination.
Stalk:	Used to describe a tea with visible stalk.

Standing up:	A tea which holds its original color and flavor is described in this manner.
Stand-out:	No surprises here. A tea liquor which is above average.
Stewed; stewy:	Describes certain thick liquoring teas, having undesirable characteristics as a result of incorrect firing.
Strength; strong:	Describes a liquor with powerful tea characteristics, but not necessarily thick. A very desirable characteristic, but not essential in certain flavoury teas.
Sumatra:	Tea grown on the island of Sumatra. Gradings and characteristics are similar to Java teas.

Tainted:	An undesirable characteristic with a taste and odor foreign to the tea.
Tannin:	The chemical component of tea thought to be responsible for its presumed health benefits. One of the major components which contributes to the taste and pungency of tea.
Tarry:	A tea which has a smokey aroma.
Tea:	The leaf and extracted liquor of the shrub <i>Camellia sinensis</i> . No other beverages merit the unqualified term tea.
Tea Taster:	An expert judge of the beverage. A person who uses organoleptic means to discern various characteristics and qualities of tea.
Tip:	The leaf bud of the <i>Camellia sinensis</i> plant.
Thick:	Describes tea liquor having substance, but not necessarily strength.
Thin; weak:	Tea liquor which lacks thickness or strength.
Tisane:	A term which describes an herbal infusion.
Toasty:	A tea which has been slightly overfired during processing. It may be a desirable characteristic in some Darjeeling teas.

Weatherly: Describes a soft, unpleasant characteristic, which is occasionally evident in the liquors of teas processed during very wet weather.

Weak: Teas which have a thin liquor.

White Tea: **Background**
To date, “genuine” white tea is considered to be derived from the first flush buds of the tea bush and grown exclusively in the Fujian Province of China. The name of ‘white tea’ refers to the silver-colored (white) hairs on the picked tea bud. White tea is the least processed of all teas. It isn’t rolled first but is immediately fired. White tea has a strong health association for consumers, but has never been studied exclusively according to public knowledge. Availability is limited and cost high as a result of the limitations of both the plucking standard and its geographical availability. Based on current demands for white tea, a new geographic standard has been proposed.

Proposed New Definition

The Tea Association of the USA has proposed a new definition. In order for White Tea to be so termed it should be:

- Processed in accordance with the strict harvesting and processing guidelines originally established in Fujian Province, China
- Made from finely plucked tender shoots (buds) of *Camellia sinensis*, which are fired or steamed and then dried.
- There should be no withering, fermentation (oxidation) or rolling of the buds.
- The liquor of White Tea is very pale yellow in color, and mild tasting in the cup.

White Tea can be made by any tea producing country providing manufacture conforms to the above harvesting and processing steps.

Pure Buds - This corresponds to “Snow Buds” or “Silver Needles” from China and Silver Tip from Sri Lanka, e.g., whole long fine unopened buds delivering very light subtle liquor.

Whole Leaf - Chinese Pai Mu Tan is commonly called White Tea. It contains both fine whole buds and coarse unfermented and non-graded green leaves. Value depends on proportion of buds, leaf appearance as well as liquor quality and color (the paler, the

better). Fannings Grade - For tea bag usage, green fannings that exhibit a high content of tip may be included as White Tea. The presence of tip must be clear and confirmed by a tea expert.

Well twisted: A tea leaf which is tightly rolled or twisted, indicative of good withering.

Wiry: Another term which means well twisted.

Woody: A characteristic reminiscent of freshly-cut timber. This trait is usually associated with teas processed very late in the season

