

March 2: Cooking with tea

Tea is the second most consumed beverage on the planet. Tea provides antioxidants with flavors varying from sweet to smoky and from fruity to floral. These tea varieties are most common and deliver distinct flavors:

Black: The most caffeinated variety, black tea delivers very robust and full-bodied flavors ranging from malty to cocoa

Oolong: also known as “black dragon” tea is a step down in caffeination from black tea and has more toasty notes and tends to taste sweeter

Green: less caffeine than darker varieties and provides earthy, grassy, and slightly bitter notes

White: a more delicate tea that’s low in caffeine. White tea tends to have a light, smooth, and honey-like taste

Herbal/Fruit: these ‘teas’ are not sourced from tea plants but rather from fruits, herbs and flowers that when dried contain flavors of lavender, citrus, berries, and floral notes. These contain little to no caffeine.

Teas can be used for more than filling your mug or glass. They can be used in various recipes while cooking or baking. Orange, lemon, or chamomile tea can be simmered with water and used as broth for cooking whole grains or beans such as quinoa, rice, and chickpeas. A more robust tea like oolong can be incorporated into chili or stews. The tannins in tea act as a natural tenderizer and therefore make great additions to marinades. Mix your cooled, brewed tea of choice with soy sauce, maple syrup, and canola oil to add to chicken, pork or steak. Allow meat to marinate for at least one hour prior to cooking.

Pep-up homemade dressings or vinaigrettes with herbal and fruit teas. Whisk ¼ cup cooled brewed tea or 2 tsp. of dry loose-leaf tea like jasmine, berry or mint with 1/3 cup olive oil, 2 Tbsp. white or red wine vinegar, 1 tsp. of honey, and ½ tsp. Dijon mustard. Pour combined ingredients over fresh leafy greens or roasted vegetables and enjoy!

Matcha and chai tea use is becoming more popular in dessert creations. Matcha tea is a vibrant green color that adds a slightly sweet flavor and pairs well with recipes also using ginger and lemon (gingerbread or lemon bars). Chai tea leaves can be pulsed down using a food processor and incorporated into sugar cookies or banana bread. Steeping hibiscus, vanilla, chai, peach, and other fruity teas into milk can create an intriguing base for custard or rice pudding recipes and can also be frozen and added to smoothie later.