

January 2026 Newsletter

? Varieteas of Teas ?

Greetings Adventurers!

What are the main types of Chinese tea?

Although all true teas come from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, different harvesting, oxidation, drying, roasting, and fermentation methods create dramatically different flavors and experiences. Chinese tea traditions have developed into distinct categories including green tea, red tea, oolong tea, white tea, and fermented teas such as pu-erh and hei cha.

Key Takeaways

- All true teas originate from the *Camellia sinensis* plant.
- Green tea is unoxidized.
- Oolong tea is partially oxidized.
- White tea is minimally processed.
- Pu-erh teas undergo fermentation.

One of the most magical things about tea is that even though all teas derive from the same [*Camelia sinesis*](#) plant, there is a seemingly endless variety of teas to explore.

That's because changing how tea is harvested (or even *when* tea leaves and tea buds are picked during the plant's life cycle), or how the leaves are cut, dried, withered, prepared and even packaged leads to very different flavors and experiences.

Which is precisely why our Tea Master [holds special weekly gatherings](#) to encourage and teach others about the craft and ritual of Chinese gongfu tea. After all, nearly all teas, from [green teas](#) to [Pu-erh teas](#), originated in ancient China. In fact, "*sinesis*" translates to "from China."

Learning about gongfu tea is an exciting quest to embark on! But it *can* be a bit overwhelming. So, we offer you this general guide to some of the most common Chinese teas available and a few of the ancient methods used to create them.



Green Tea

Though mostly associated with Japan, [ceremonial matcha](#) – the powdered tea that is frothed into a delightful brew with a special whisk – actually originated from the Tang dynasty in China. And though it is by far the most famous green tea, we invite you explore other Chinese green tea varieties.

Chinese green tea is the most ancient of all teas, and there are thousands of different varieties.

Green tea is unique amongst Chinese teas in that it is not oxidized at all, but heated by either pan-frying or steaming immediately after being harvested.

Never the less, there's an endless number of ways green tea leaves are prepared. For example, to create one of the most traditional Chinese green teas, [Dragon Well](#) tea, the leaves are rolled flat and pan-fried.

Other green teas are processed by rolling the harvested leaves into tight curls or spirals. And still *other* green teas are beguiling, like [GPT's Master's Green Tea](#). This tea defies expectations by being calming instead of energizing!

Learn more about The Tea Tavern's green teas [here](#).



Black (Red) Tea

What we call *black tea* in the West is known as *hong cha* (??) in China — [literally “red tea.”](#) In most cases, this is because of the color of the tea once steeped, such as with our [Jin Ju Mei](#) tea, the brew can look a bit a bit like Western black teas, though the darkness of the brew can vary. The lighter color of the Jin Ju Mei tea is due partly due to the fact the leaves are harvested from the Wuyi Mountains in the Fujian Province during the early spring.

On the other end of the color spectrum (at least within Chinese red teas) is [Black Phoenix](#), a very dark tea that most Westerners would look at think of as a traditional black tea. This blend gets its bold, cacao flavor from a highly specific process of oxidation and roasting.

Not to be outdone in adding a colorful name to the “red” tea spectrum, Nepal has its own version of a Chinese red tea, the [Tinjure ‘Golden Black’ Ilam](#), which is hand picked and minimally processed by the [Tinjure Tea Cooperative](#). True to its name, this tea more closely resembles a golden elixir than a red or black brew, however.

Whatever color is revealed in the cup, however, we can assure you Chinese “red” teas are always offer comfort and warmth.

Explore all of The Tea Tavern Chinese Red teas [here](#).



Oolong Tea

Sitting between green and black teas is Oolong tea. A favorite amongst tea drinkers, Oolongs can be anything from light and fruity to slightly woody and rich. All, however, are created using highly specific oxidation methods.

Take [Bird King Da Hong Pao](#), for example. Tea leaves foraged from the ancient, 400- to 800-year-old indigenous Bird King trees in Guizhou were roasted twice in accordance with Tea Master Lian's family tradition. In a region well known for its centuries of tea craftsmanship, Master Lian and his daughter applied Da Hong Pao methods from Fujian to leaves that had been resting since August, resulting in a wholly new flavor profile and experience.

Another perfect example of the craftsmanship that creates a perfect cup of Oolong tea is the [Phoenix High Mountain Oolong](#). The leaves are harvested from trees that defiantly grow amidst the craggy rocks of the cool mountainsides in the northern Guangdong Province. Each tea tree grove is cultivated to emulate specific flavors of various flowers and fruits. Once harvested, the leaves are oxidized for a highly specified amount of time using the wulong method.

Find your perfect Oolong tea [here](#).



?? White Teas

White tea is the most delicate of all — lightly processed and soft on the palate. Each cup of white tea is a story of heritage, culture, and gently extracting new flavors and experiences from ancient methods.

Other white teas are prepared as delicately as the brew they yield. The Himalayan tea leaves harvested to make [Phidiyam White Prakash](#) – extra fuzzy to protect them from the cold – are simply air dried, yielding a light and delicate flavor that contrasts with the harsh environment in which the trees grow.

Another impressive example of coaxing flavor from nearly-untouched tea leaves is the [Aged Master's White](#) tea. Harvested at Pan Yin Mountain by our friends at [Grass People Tree](#) from Bird King trees that are anywhere from 400 to 600 years old, this tea is processed using 100 percent natural, ancient methods without artificial heat and humidity by Master Lin in 2016. In comparison to other white teas, that means an extra long withering, or drying, time, sometimes done in the shade or at night specifically to lengthen this part of the process. All this is done to help the signature floral notes of white tea blossom even more.

? Explore a range of White teas with our [Wild Tea Sampler](#).



? Pu-erh & Hei Cha (Fermented) Teas

Pu-erh teas, most simply put, are black, fermented teas known for a variety of bold, more assertive flavors (though some can have whispers of floral notes). Of course, as with all Chinese tea craftsmanship, there are different methods of fermentation and preparation that are all steeped in their own traditions and regional cultures.

This is reflected in the wide variety of colors pu-erh and Hei Cha teas are available in. From the midnight black of the assertive [Tei Ji Shu Pu-erh](#), which uses a “pile fermentation” method to the cheerful bright red of [Aini Bamboo Shu Pu’erh](#), traditionally processed in a section of cut bamboo, this category of tea is an entire quest of its own within the tea enthusiast world.

Explore our Hei Cha & Pu-erh Teas, including samples, [here](#).

? Where to Start?

If you're just beginning your tea adventure:

- Start with a lighter **Green or White tea** if you love delicate notes.
- Try **Oolong** to experience layered complexity.

No matter your taste, Tea Tavern offers carefully selected loose-leaf teas, sustainably sourced and crafted for delightful brewing. You can sample teas to find your perfect cup.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the main types of Chinese tea?

The primary categories of Chinese tea are green tea, red tea (commonly called black tea in the West), oolong tea, white tea, and fermented teas such as pu-erh and hei cha.

Do all teas come from the same plant?

Yes. All true teas originate from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. Differences in flavor, aroma, and appearance are created through harvesting techniques and processing methods.

What is the difference between green tea and black tea?

Green tea is heated shortly after harvest to prevent oxidation, while black tea (known as red tea in China) is fully oxidized, resulting in deeper flavors and darker colors.

What is oolong tea?

Oolong tea is a partially oxidized tea that sits between green and red teas. Depending on processing methods, oolongs can range from light and floral to rich and roasted.

Why is white tea considered delicate?

White tea undergoes minimal processing and is often simply withered and dried. This preserves subtle flavors and aromas that many tea drinkers describe as soft and refined.

What is pu-erh tea?

Pu-erh tea is a fermented Chinese tea known for its depth, complexity, and aging potential. Traditional fermentation methods can create flavors ranging from earthy and rich to smooth and sweet.

And don't forget to join the [Traveling Tea Tavern](#), our monthly gathering during which people learn about the ancient ritual of gongfu steeping, share stories and laughter, and enjoy tea with other Adventurers!

Make starting easy with our [Adventurer's Brewer Kit](#). Everything you need to begin exploring tea at home!

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