

Mark T. Wendell Tea Company Tea Tutorial

Adding tea to your food and beverage offerings?

Here a few helpful tips.

As a specialty food and beverage retailer, you have no doubt seen the unprecedented growth in tea consumption in the United States and are realizing its potential as a new product line to help increase profits in your business. The cost of making a cup of tea can range from 2 to 6 cents per cup. If you are serving tea to your customers, just remember that one pound of loose tea makes about 160 cups! This translates to a lower price per cup cost than coffee, which averages about 8 cents per cup. Since 1904, the Mark T. Wendell Tea Company has been supplying fine teas to tea connoisseurs all over the world. During this time we have gained a superior knowledge with regard to the purchasing and marketing of specialty teas to potential clients. Here are a few recommendations to help incorporate specialty tea into your business.

What is Tea?

All tea comes from the tropical plant known as *Camellia Senensis*. The tea plant grows best in a warm climate with long sunlit days, cool nights and an abundance of rainfall. Tea plants grow at altitudes ranging from sea level to 7,000 feet and on latitudes as far North as Turkey in the Mideast and as far South as Argentina in South America. The best tea grows at higher altitudes, and many bushes can be cultivated for over 100 years. Tea bushes cover about six million acres of the earth and are harvested every week during the almost year-long growing season.

After each winter season, the first small leaves and buds of the tea bush are hand-plucked and harvested. Once exposed to air, the leaf will begin to wither. When the picked leaf becomes pliable, it can then be turned into different types of tea. The most common types of tea all come from the same *Camellia Senensis* bush, however the method in which they are processed varies.

Green Tea

To produce green tea, the leaves are put into a steamer immediately after plucking. This stops the chemical changes from occurring in the leaf by never allowing it to wither and ferment. By eliminating the fermentation process, the dry leaf retains its green color, all its natural goodness and original beauty. Light in color and flavor, green tea has the lowest amount of caffeine and is loaded with health benefiting antioxidants. The best Green Teas come from China and Japan.

Oolong Tea

This tea is semi-oxidized. It is "in-between" green and black teas. After plucking, it is allowed to oxidize for a short period, producing a unique brown leaf. Large twisted leaves produce a pleasant aroma and light brew. The caffeine content is half of black tea. The best Oolong teas come from the Island of Formosa and China.

Black Tea

In the case of Black tea, the picked leaf is left out in the sun to wither. It is then put into a machine and rolled, thereby bruising the leaf. This process causes the leaves' juices to react with the air and oxidize. The green leaf turns black and is then fired in huge drying ovens. Black tea is the most common tea consumed in this country. The best come from China, India and Ceylon. They are oftentimes flavored or scented, and several teas are blends developed over time by prominent tea merchants. The drying process leaves Black tea with more caffeine than other types.

White Tea

This tea is the rarest and most delicate tea. It is plucked within two days between the time the first buds become fully mature and the time they open. The leaves are then allowed to wither to allow the natural moisture to evaporate before being dried in the open air. White tea leaves are large in size but are more delicate than those of other tea types, therefore you should use more leaves per cup than with other teas. White tea contains the same antioxidants found in green tea, and because it undergoes less processing it is believed to be more beneficial to your health than other types.

Herbal Tisanes

Herbal Tisanes are comprised of herbs, spices, fruit pieces and flavorings and do not contain the traditional tea leaves of the *Camellia Senensis* plant. Herbal “teas” come in many unique flavors and are naturally caffeine free.

If I am offering loose teas to my customers, what types of tea should I serve?

A broad range of teas can satisfy the differing tastes and moods of your customers. So it is best to pick a few items from the different types of tea (black, green, oolong, scented, special blends, decaffeinated, flavored and herbals). To create a well-represented tea program, we recommend at least 12-14 teas to start. When your customer base increases, you can add more tea offerings (organic teas, white teas, and more complex varieties.) These are simply suggestions for a starting point to your tea program and oftentimes need to be altered depending on customer requests and geographical beverage interests.

Mark T. Wendell Loose Tea Recommendations

Our Blends:	English Breakfast, Cheericup Ceylon, Irish Breakfast
Black:	Darjeeling, China Yunnan
Green:	Young Hyson, Japanese Sencha
Oolong:	Formosa Oolong
Scented:	Earl Grey, Hu-Kwa (our Formosa Lapsang)
Decaf:	Decaffeinated English Breakfast
Flavored:	Pick One or Two that sound appealing
Herbal:	Rooibos, Peppermint Leaf

How much should tea should I buy initially?

Since merchandising tea is a new segment of your business, it is oftentimes hard to gauge how much product to initially purchase. We would recommend first orders to be on the conservative side. With our quick service and stocked warehouse, you can re-order when necessary and receive your order in a matter of days.

How do I store the tea leaves?

When tea is stored properly, it will remain fresh for an extended period of time. Tea does not respond well to light, moisture and odors. Therefore steps should be taken to store loose tea leaves in an opaque tin or tin lined wooden container that is sealed air tight. We offer our signature one pound black and gold tins for purchase and find that they make a standard storage display for vendors who sell bulk teas. Tea should never be refrigerated! Many retailers choose to display loose tea leaves in glass containers, allowing the customer to become intrigued by the sight and variety of the teas offered. This is a good way to create a buzz about the loose teas that you offer, but it is best to avoid glass containers for storing your entire inventory of loose tea. We recommend keeping samples of the different offerings in view and then get fresher tea leaves from the proper storage container when a purchase is made.

What if I want to serve tea to my customers?

Depending on your business, you may want to serve brewed tea to your customers.

Loose Leaf Tea vs. Tea bags: The decision to offer loose tea or tea bags to your customers to brew in-house is based upon your specific needs. There are several differences between both options that one should be aware of. Brewed loose leaf tea is the best way to make a cup of tea. Optimum taste and the fullest flavor are attained if the leaves are allowed to unfurl slowly, without the tea bag inhibiting the process. Tea bag teas are made from whole tea leaves that are broken to fit into the teabags. Unfortunately, this process can weaken the taste and inhibit the healthy benefits of the tea plant.

To brew loose tea, there are several equipment options from which to choose. You can use traditional or fancy teapots (brewed in back or at the table, timed accordingly, and then decanted with proper strainer and filters into the customer's tea cup), a cup with a tea infuser, or a dedicated brewing machine or hot water dispenser (decanted behind the counter and then served).

For many retailers, the most ideal and proper way to brew tea leaves may not be easy for them to fit into a store that already has several pieces of equipment dedicated to coffee or other food items. If this is the case, then serving teabag tea may be the answer. They provide you with a serving method that is more convenient for your "on the go" customers and are easy to clean up. If the ease and portability of teabags appeals to you, but you want to offer your customers the best tea you can, individual cup filters may be the answer. Paper tea filters and reusable permanent filters are used with unbroken tea leaves and are simply placed into the customer's cup. While boiling water is added and the tea has been allowed to steep, it can be removed and easily discarded.

How to Brew A Pot of Tea

Different types of tea need different water temperatures and different infusion times, but there are a few steadfast guidelines to follow in order to achieve the perfect cup of tea:

Fill the kettle or teapot with freshly drawn cold water (it must contain oxygen in order to bring out the full flavor of the tea). We recommend using filtered water because the quality of your water will directly affect the taste of your tea. Many towns have water that has too much chlorine or mineral content. When the water is near the boiling point, pour a little into the teapot, swirl around, and tip away. This leaves a hot, clean teapot.

Measure the tea carefully into the pot, allowing one rounded teaspoon or one teabag for each cup required. Many people prefer to use a tea ball or filter to keep the leaves from spreading throughout the teapot. Bring the water to a rolling boil. Do not allow it to boil too long, as it will boil away some of the flavor-releasing oxygen and result in a flat cup of tea. Please note that **green tea should be made with water that has boiled and allowed to cool for just under a minute.**

Pour the water onto the leaves or tea bags. This saturates the tea, allowing the flavor to release naturally. Do not pour the water and then add the tea, this will only result in a poor cup of tea. Allow the tea to infuse for the required number of minutes.

Black Tea	infuse for 5 minutes
Flavored Black Tea	infuse for 4-5 minutes
Darjeeling Tea	infuse for 3 minutes
Oolong Tea	infuse for 3-4 minutes
Green Tea	infuse for 2-3 minutes
White Tea	infuse for 2-3 minutes
Herbal Tisanes	infuse for 7-10 minutes

The guidelines presented above are simply suggestions. Once you and your customers feel more comfortable with preparing tea, you can experiment to create the proper ratio and brewing time for your taste. If you prefer your tea stronger or weaker, never vary the brewing time; simply increase or decrease the amount of tea. If allowed to sit in the teapot, the tea can over-brew and turn bitter.

Merchandising Mark T. Wendell Teas

By serving our loose leaf teas to your customers, you are providing them with some of the finest teas available. Oftentimes customers will want to purchase our teas to serve at home. We pack our full line of loose teas in classic gold 4 ounce tins that can be offered for resale to your customers. This is a great way to increase your tea sales.

We also are proud to import and distribute several packaged tea products from British, French, Japanese and Chinese tea sources. Many of these items are hard to find in the United States and make a welcome addition to any tea shop's variety.

Ideas for selling packaged teas

Oftentimes business who are offering packaged teas to their customers for the first time are unsure as to where to begin with an initial offering. The follow suggestive list gives a good cross section for tea customers who are looking for specialty teas (loose tins and in teabags), Gift Ideas (Boston Harbour and Lifeboat teas), Imported brand names (Typhoo and PG Tips) and flavorful herbal and fruit teas (London Fruit and Herb Co. and Heath & Heather).

Mark T. Wendell Tea Tins and Teabags:

Hu-Kwa (if you think you have a customer base for it, it is what we are known for. A smoky Lapsang Souchong that has a mellow cup when brewed)

Available in 25 ct teabags, 4 ounce tins and 8 ounce tins

English Breakfast: 6 pieces of 4 ounce tins
6 pieces of 25 ct. teabags

Cheericup Ceylon 6 pieces of 4 ounce tins
6 pieces of 25 ct. teabags

Irish Breakfast 6 pieces of 4 ounce tins
6 pieces of 25 ct. teabags

Young Hyson Green 6 pieces of 4 ounce tins
6 pieces of 25 ct teabags

Earl Grey 6 pieces of 4 ounce tins
6 pieces of 25 ct teabags

Gunpowder Green 6 pieces of 4 ounce tins

China Jasmine 6 pieces of 4 ounce tins

Formosa Oolong 6 pieces of 4 ounce tins

Think about adding a decaffeinated tea, if you think you have a consumer interest for it. If you are serving our loose teas to your customers, make sure to offer the corresponding quarter pound tins for re-sale as well.

Boston Harbour Tea

1 case of 25 count teabags
1 case of 4 oz loose tea tins
1 case of wooden Tea Chests with teabags

Imported Packaged Teas and Herbal Teas

6 pieces of Typhoo 80 count teabags
1 case of 40 count PG Tips teabags
6 pieces of Lifeboat 80 count teabags
Assorted Heath & Heather and London Fruit and Herb Co.
20 ct herbal tea boxes

The Heath & Heather and London Fruit and Herb teas sell great! They are caffeine-free and tasty. They make good iced teas and come in many different flavors, so choose a couple from each product line. The best sellers are: H & H Wild Blackcurrant, H & H Mango & Apple, H & H Apple & Cinnamon and LFH Peach Paradise, LFH Raspberry Rendezvous, LFH Blackcurrant Bracer, LFH Lemon Lime Zest, LFH Blueberry Bliss as well as the Sampler boxes.

As your sales increase and your tea customers grow, add a few more items to round out your offerings. Please feel free to let us know if you need any help with the ordering process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hartley E. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Hartley E. Johnson
Mark T. Wendell Tea Company