



Smithsonian Associates



Tea Traditions of Taiwan: A Taste of the Alishan Region

Friday, December 6, 2024 - 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. ET

The ISO 3103 standard outlines the specifications for teacups and bowls used in sensory evaluations. It offers guidelines on their size, shape, and material, ensuring that tea assessments are consistent and fair.

Materials

1. White porcelain teacup with lid
2. White porcelain tea tasting bowl
3. Electronic scale
4. Timer
5. Stirring spoon
6. Tea tasting spoon
7. Rag
8. Individual tea tasting cup

Brewing Method

1. **Tea to Water Ratio:** The ratio of tea to water is 1:50. 3 grams of tea needs to be brewed in 150 ml of water. This ensures that the tea is brewed at the proper strength for sensory evaluation.
2. **Water Temperature:** Boiling water should be used for the tea sensory evaluation process.
3. **Water Quality:** Slightly acidic water with a pH value between 6.0 and 6.5 is often considered ideal for tea brewing. The TDS, which stands for Total Dissolved Solids, is the amount of dissolved substances in water. This includes both inorganic things like minerals and salts and organic matter. The TDS level is important because it affects how well the water can extract flavor from the tea leaves.
4. **Brewing Time:** The steeping time should be 5-6 minutes, adjusted based on the type of tea. For different shapes of tea leaves, the steeping time varies.
 - *Strip-shaped tea - 5 minutes*
 - Non-fermented tea: Bi-Lo-Chung Green tea
 - Partially-fermented fragrant strip-type tea: Wenshan Paochong tea
 - Fully fermented tea: Big-leaf black tea, Small-leaf black tea, honey flavor black tea
 - *Ball-shaped tea - 6 minutes*
 - Partially-fermented fragrant ball-type tea: High-mountain Oolong tea

- Partially-fermented fragrant roasted ball-type oolong tea: Dongding Oolong tea, Tieh-Kuan-Yin tea, Red Oolong tea, GABA tea
- *Oriental Beauty Tea - 5.5 minutes*
 - Partially-fermented tea: Oriental Beauty Tea

Strip-shaped tea leaves unfurl more easily during brewing, quickly releasing their flavors and needing a shorter steeping time. In contrast, ball-shaped tea leaves are tightly rolled, taking longer to open and requiring more time to fully release their flavor. Oriental beauty tea is somewhere in between.

Brewing Process

1. **Set Up the Brewing Utensils**
2. **Weigh the Tea:** Start by measuring 3 grams of tea leaves.
3. **Add Boiling Water:** Place the tea leaves in the teapot and pour in 150 ml of boiling water at 100°C. Ensure the water fills up to the mouth of the teapot. Once the water is added, immediately cover the teapot with its lid to preserve the heat and aroma during the process.
4. **Steep the Tea:** Allow the tea to steep for 5-6 minutes, adjusting based on the tea type.
5. **Pour the Tea Liquor:** After steeping, pour the tea liquor into a bowl for evaluation.
6. **Gently Stir the Tea Bowl:** To easily observe the color change and maintain the clarity of the tea liquor, we use a spoon to gently stir in a half-circle motion, gathering any loose leaves or sediment in the center.
7. **Cool the Tea:** Let the tea sit for 6-8 minutes to cool down to around 40-50°C for tasting.
8. **Examine the Brewed Tea Leaves:** Check the brewed tea leaves for their variety, season, and fermentation level.

Five-Factor Tea Tasting Evaluation: Key Items and Process

1. **Appearance:** Examine the dry tea leaves for their shape and color, which are shaped by the products formed during the initial and refining processes.
2. **Liquor Color:** Examine the tea liquor for its color, intensity, clarity, and brightness.
3. **Aroma:** Examine the type, intensity, strength, clearness, and purity of the tea aroma. Pay attention to whether there are any undesirable odors, such as dull, smoky, burnt, stale, musty.
4. **Taste:** Examine the tea's thickness, lightness, sweetness, bitterness, sourness, and astringency to assess its flavor profile.
5. **Infused Tea Leaves:** The cultivar, season, thickness, aging, uniformity, and degree of fermentation of the tea should be examined to evaluate its overall quality.