





TISANE THERAPY

a introduction to tea-less tea

HERBALS TEAS ARE HIP, WE GET IT. BUT SOME OF THE MANY BEAUTIFUL BLENDS OUT THERE OFFER MORE THAN JUST A DELICIOUS CUPPA. WE'VE SIPPED, SAVOURED AND STUDIED SOME OF THE BEST TISANES ON THE MARKET.

Words: **Maddie Lakos, Sita Huber**

There are people, and then there are tea people. The kind of people whose hearts flutter when they hear words like 'steep', and who have an entire shelf dedicated to different boxes of tea, and perhaps a collection of teapots and cups to go with them. If you aren't one, you know one. But even less enthusiastic tea imbibers can relate to the joy of a hot cup containing a fragrant blend of something-or-other. "What I love about tea is that it's for all ages and walks of life; the love of tea is the common thread that binds everyone," says co-founder of the Melbourne and Sydney Tea Festivals Renee Creer. "There are so many different types, flavours and styles of tea out there to discover and explore, and it's also great for different moods and situations: it can be indulgent, comforting, cleansing, relaxing or uplifting, so however you feel or want to feel, there's usually a tea to match.

"Then the added bonus is drinking tea is good for you, so in my book, it's pretty much the perfect drink."

Currently on trend, though hardly new on the tea scene, are tisanes. "A 'tea' is made from the leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant," says Creer,

"whereas a 'tisane' is made from herbs, flowers, fruits, barks, roots and so on, and does not contain tea leaves." This means that our beloved 'herbal teas' aren't actually teas at all; the correct term is tisane or infusion.

It might sound complicated, but tisanes are actually pleasantly simple. "Tea leaves go through a number of processing stages, which also depend on the type of tea that's being created; some of these stages include wilting, oxidising or fixing, rolling, drying and, in some cases, fermenting," says Creer. "For tisanes, the ingredients are harvested at the peak of their flavour, bundled or chopped, depending on the type of herb, and then dried." This means that a tisane can be the best way to appreciate the natural flavours of herbs, flowers, etc. And receive the greatest benefits from the ingredients. Many tisanes are developed specifically for health. "Tisanes have been used for centuries for their medicinal properties, which vary based on the plant used – there are too many health benefits to list!" says Creer.

We've put together a list of a few healthy, happy tisanes for you to try.

Top tips for tisanes

With Renee Creer

What is the difference between bagged and loose-leaf tea?

Tea bags were created for speed, efficiency, convenience and mass manufacture. The tea leaves used in mass market tea bags are very finely chopped, almost into a dust, and the quality and freshness of this tea can be dubious. However, many brands now do offer quality tea, which have larger or whole leaves in pyramid bags, which improves the quality of the product. Also, the material of the tea bags can contain chemicals.

Loose-leaf specialty teas are created with the intention of enhancing the characteristics of the leaf and its unique natural flavours; loose leaf tea tends towards the more artisan approach to manufacture, so tea leaves are generally of a better quality.

Should I use a pot or cup?

Steeping tea or tisanes loose in a pot gives the leaves or herbal ingredients more water flow and room to unfurl and release flavours, so it's worth taking the time to brew in a pot. And it creates more of a ritual around making a cup of tea and brings a bit of mindfulness to tea time, which I think increases the enjoyment.

How do you know how long you should steep a tea/tisane for?

Different teas need different water temperatures and steeping times and instructions should always be provided on the optimal measures, but ultimately, do what tastes good to you and try out different things. Herbal tisanes work best with boiling water and longer infusions – around five to 10 minutes – so the flavours in the ingredients can fully release and develop. And remember, if you want a stronger tea, use more leaves in the pot, don't steep the tea for longer.

Mount Zero Olive Leaf Tea with Lemongrass and Spearmint

(biodynamic Manzanilla olive leaves, lemongrass leaves, spearmint leaves)

Never had olive leaf tisane before? With a soft fragrance similar to high-quality olive oil, the biodynamic olive leaves in this blend give it a subtle earthy 'greenness', which is complimented by the tang of lemongrass and the freshness of spearmint. Lovers of peppermint tea will be all over this subtle blend. Mount Zero uses only the fresh shoots, which are then steamed, rubbed, rolled and dried. Olive leaves are high in antioxidants and are thought to deliver the same immunity-boosting and cold-and-flu-relieving benefits as olive leaf extract.

Tasting notes: earthy and fragrant

Find out more at mountzeroolives.com



as an uplifting evening cuppa



as a mid-morning pick-me-up and digestive aid

XO Tea Julep with Mint, Lemon Balm and Pineapple

(peppermint leaf, spearmint leaf, lemon balm leaf, candied pineapple, natural pineapple extract, marigold flowers)

If you stick your snoz into a box of this tisane and breathe deeply, you'll find yourself in a gorgeous garden on a hot summer's day – or close enough. It is fresh like cut grass and peppermints and sweet with tropical fruit and flowers. The makers at XO Tea call it stimulating, refreshing and flamboyant; we'll add delightfully summery and easy on the tummy. Lemon balm and mint can both ease digestive ailments, and the pineapple is just for fun.

Tasting notes: fruity and fresh

Find out more at xoteas.com.au

Pukka Relax

(fennel seed, liquorice root, chamomile flower, gotu kola leaf, cardamom seed, ginger root, marshmallow root, ashwagandha root)

Pukka uses Ayurveda medicine to create delicious organic blends with benefits. Their Relax tea is vata: made with calming herbs with soothing properties. Chamomile flower and gotu kola leaf help you to unwind; fennel seed, ginger and cardamom seed ease digestion; and marshmallow root and liquorice help to settle the mind. The spicy flavours of liquorice, cardamom and ginger are softened by the marshmallow and chamomile, leaving a slightly sweet note to the cup.

Tasting notes: Floral and fruity

Find out more at pukkaherbs.com.au



in the evening to release the tension of the day

Yarra Valley Tea Co New You Detox

(certified organic dandelion leaf and root, nettle, birch, raspberry leaf, elderflower, calendula and cornflower)

A decidedly pretty tisane, the Yarra Valley Tea Co New You Detox blend smells like a garden in spring and kind of looks like one too (inside a tiny, biodegradable 'tea temple', or pyramid teabag). Made with local ingredients designed to satisfy and cleanse, it's said to be the perfect compliment to a healthy lifestyle change.

Tasting notes: earthy and floral

Find out more at yarravalleytea.com.au



all day instead of coffee or reaching for the cookie jar



Your Tea Anti-C Tea

(Taraxacum (dandelion), Camellia sinensis (black tea), chrysanthemum)

Although it's technically not a tisane, Your Tea formulates its teas using traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) for some interesting outcomes. The Anti-C (for anti-cellulite) tea is formulated to "assist in cleansing the kidney and liver [and] help your body to lift stagnant dampness and phlegm". Perfect for winter, right? While not everyone subscribes to TCM, this approachable blend of earthy dandelion and black tea plus uplifting floral notes is a great pick-me-up and a well-rounded replacement for traditional black tea.

Tasting notes: floral and earthy

Find out more at yourtea.com



before meals and on an empty stomach, but not before bed

Kintra Foods Dandy Chai

(roasted dandelion root, roasted chicory root, cinnamon, star anise, cardamom, ginger, nutmeg and cloves)

The warm and calm feeling you get while sipping on a hot cup of dandy chai isn't just because it's delicious. At Kintra Foods, they believe that dandelion root is a great purifier that benefits the liver, kidneys and even your blood. Combined with the comfort of cinnamon and other aromatic spices, it's a wintery treat with therapeutic benefits.

Tasting notes: spicy, earthy and rich

Find out more at kintrafoods.com.au



instead of coffee now and then



Tea Tonic Australiana Tea

(lemon myrtle, eucalyptus leaf, sage)

Anyone who loves getting out of town, rolling the windows down and letting the smell of the country wash over them will love immersing their senses in Tea Tonic's Australiana Tea. Eucalypt is a brilliant natural anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial product that will help keep you breathing clear. All of Tea Tonic's products are Australian Certified Organic and formulated by naturopath and herbalist Lisa Hilbert for health and wellbeing.

Tasting notes: fruity, spicy and earthy

Find out more at teatonic.com.au



as an energising, caffeine-free morning brew

Planet Organic Immunita

(certified organic elderflower, Echinacea and olive leaf)

Winter and tea is a great combo, and if you can make that a tisane that's also designed to ward off sniffles and other ails – then why not? Planet Organic's Immunita is a warming, invigorating blend of high-antioxidant ingredients to bolster your natural immunities. It's super floral and light – perfect for all-day sipping.

Tasting notes: spicy and floral

Find out more at planetorganic.com.au



when you need a pick-me-up or you're feeling a cold coming on



Madame Flavour Soothing Mint and Lavender

(organic and conventional peppermint leaf, organic spearmint leaf, lavender flowers, organic Australian round leaf mint, organic blue cornflowers)

If you want to achieve a new level of soothed and calm, this tisane is for you. Combining the digestive qualities of organic mints with the send-you-to-sleep aroma of lavender (which also happens to be an anti-anxiolytic, meaning that it helps to combat anxiety), it's perfect for easing stress and/or helping you nod off. You can even download a 'tea meditation' courtesy of the experts at Smiling Mind on the Madame Flavour website.

Tasting notes: floral and earthy

Find out more at madameflavour.com



after a hard day at the office, before bed or anytime you need to chill

Stash Licorice Spice

(Licorice root, cinnamon, orange peel, Chinese star anise, vanilla flavour, sarsaparilla, orange oil, cinnamon oil, clove bud oil and cardamom oil)

Rich, spicy and warm, this tisane is as cosy and comforting as throwing a woolly blanket over yourself on a chilly evening. While the herbal taste of liquorice root and star anise might not be for everyone, it also has a delightful natural sweetness that's super satisfying – so worth a try for taste sceptics. Stash is located in Portland, Oregon, and prides itself as one of the oldest and most experienced creators of tisanes.

Tasting notes: spicy and earthy

Find out more at stashtea.com




to energise and warm up



Now Real Tea Ojibwa Herbal Cleansing Tea

(red clover flowers, burdock root, sheep sorrel herb, liquorice root, slippery elm bark, dandelion root, barberry root bark and turkey rhubarb root)

This is a tisane that's steeped in history. Ojibwa is a traditional North American herbal beverage prepared by the Ojibwa Indians of North Ontario, Canada. It's been a trusted herbal remedy for decades, designed to heal and promote general wellness. 

Tasting notes: earthy

Find out more at organiximports.com.au



as a restorative drink that soothes the body, mind and spirit