

Cure the Chinese New Year's Indulgence With Restorative Tea

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As we celebrated the Year of the Earth Rat in February, life was a party and a time for family, friends, food, beverage and lots of very loud fireworks. Thanks, Buddha, for the great tea in this land, as it has again proven itself to be the best cure for holiday indulgence. Thus, let's start off the new "lunar 12-year cycle" with a tribute story to the health benefits of tea (*cha*) from a Chinese perspective.

Tea is an evergreen tree or shrub, depending on the variety, and it's loaded with highly condensed polyphenols. Even though the Japanese traditionally have led the path in the field of scientific tea research, the Chinese government recently has been pumping millions of dollars into research on the *cha* and traditional Chinese medicine industries, as they are gaining worldwide acceptance. These two industries are considered to be the "gems of the Orient," far outpacing the importance of silk, gunpowder and paper, which also originated here.

According to some Chinese research data I have obtained, the biochemical analysis of fresh tea leaf is as follows:

- Water: 75% - 78%
- Dry Matter: 22% - 25%

Dry Matter Breakdown:

Organic Matter: 93% - 96%

- Polyphenols: 20% - 35%
- Proteins: 20% - 30%
- Carbohydrates: 20% - 25%
- Fat: 8%
- Alkaloids: 3% - 5%
- Organic acids: 3%
- Amino acids: 1% - 4%
- Pigments: 1%
- Vitamins: 0.6% - 1%
- Aromatic constituents: 0.003% - 0.005%
- Enzymes: no data

Inorganic Matter: 4% - 7%

- Water soluble: 2% - 4%
- Water insoluble: 1.5% - 3%

Even though this is impressive information, it's lacking in that the specific variety of tea analyzed is not identified, which is a rather large detail, seeing as there are more than 300 varieties from which to choose. Furthermore, many of China's teas are oxidized (red/black teas made from green tea leaves), which will have significantly different properties resulting from the processing.

It's important to note that one of the most significant aspects of the constituents of tea, other than their extreme necessity for health, is the simple fact that its components are water-soluble. This makes it ideal for the consumer to easily reap the benefits of the product. The significance of the "compound/vitamin groups" contained in tea is numerous.

Caffeine (a major component in aspirin) stimulates the central nervous system and blood circulation. This helps muscles relax and increases metabolic process at the body's cellular level. It affects blood vessel dilation, preventing and treating cardiovascular and coronary diseases such as angina pectoris and myocardial infarction. It also treats headache and the common cold with no side effects.

Theophylline is a nervine, acting as a sedative to the nervous system. This is important, making tea act as an "adaptogen" herb that balances metabolism (similar to ginseng). Polyphenols, amino acids and carbohydrates break down and remove toxins (including radioactive poison SR90) when combined with oligosaccharose and vitamin C - both found in tea - and reduce inflammation and kill bacteria. Iodine promotes thyroid health. Fluoride promotes bone, teeth, hair and nail growth. Inositol, folic acid, pantothenic acid, methionine, thenylcyoteine, cholive and aromatic oils promote fat-burning metabolism and aid in digestion.

Vitamin C and vitamin P (bioflavonoids) prevent cerebral hemorrhage. Catechins (contained in polyphenols) prevent arteriosclerosis and apoplexy by maintaining blood vessel health. Pantothenic acid moistens the skin and aids in lung health. Vitamin B1 promotes blood cell growth. Vitamin B2 alleviates inflammation.

And if that wasn't enough, tea combats alcohol and nicotine poisoning due to a neutralization process caused by caffeine and polyphenols! This may be truer than we understand. Here in China, many people drink like fish and smoke like chimneys. It is a fact that there is a significantly lower rate of lung cancer here in China than in any Western culture, according to recent studies conducted in Britain.

So, lets all make a healthy toast to our future with tea!

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