

The Emperor's Tea

In the early days of Japan there was a particular high grade Tea cultivated on a mountain near the small town of Udsi, which was not far from Miaco, the capital city and residence of the Ecclesiastical Hereditary Emperor of Japan.

This Tea, which was called Udsi Tsjaa, was produced exclusively for the Emperor's court and Imperial Family, and the Chief Purveyor of Tea at the Imperial court was responsible for its care and attention.

The shrubs were planted in walks which were swept and cleaned every day and under no circumstances was dirt allowed to touch the leaf.

For at least three weeks prior to the Tea leaves being picked the Tea pickers were forced to abstain from eating fish or any unclean food, lest by the impurity of their breath they might stain the leaves and rob them of their goodness.

They were compelled to wear gloves in order that their fingers might not touch the leaves and they also had to bathe in hot water or in the river at least three times a day.

Leppet Tea

Probably the most interesting of the applications of Tea leaf is in the manufacture of Leppet Tea of the Shan States and neighbouring district of Burma.

This product is used for local consumption and does not enter into external commerce. Two methods of preparation are described. West of the Irrawaddy the leaf is softened in boiling water and then rolled and allowed to cool. It is then rammed into a length of bamboo, retaining one of the natural diaphragms and the end plugged. The bamboos are then inverted to drain away moisture and finally buried in the soil for the leaf to mature.



Sailors Ahoy! This nautical-looking lass is none other than Hazel Jarrett, of Casino

East of the river a different process is employed though the principal remains the same.

The softened and rolled leaf is tightly packed into a pit in the ground, lined with boards or matting and pressure applied by piling heavy weights on a cover over the leaf. In due course the leaf assumes a yellow colour when it is ready for sale.

As in the case of Tibet Teas, Leppet Tea is not used for making a beverage. The cured leaf is eaten direct as a vegetable or mixed with garlic, oil and salt to form a kind of salad.

The Mandarin's Tea

The Mandarins and wealthier Chinese prepare Tea in a small hollow ball made of either gold or silver, about the size of a walnut, suspended from a finger ring by a slender chain of the same material four or five inches long.

This "Tea Ball" is divided in the middle, the halves being hinged and perforated with innumerable holes but is often made like a globular sieve of gold or silver wire connected in the same manner. The halves are filled with Tea leaves and then clasped tight and suspended by the ring and chain from one of the fingers of the right hand into a porcelain cup of freshly boiling water and gently moved to and fro or up and down until the water is coloured to the desired height, the strength of the infusion thus depending mainly on the length of time the Tea ball is agitated in the cup, making it weak or strong as may be required. The Chinese invariably make the infusion with rain or spring water heated to a high degree, the boiling lasting only a few minutes, and poured on the leaves just as soon as the bubbles appear on top of the water.

TEA TO TASTE

We Australians, like the other Tea-drinking peoples of the world, all have our own particular fads about drinking Tea. Some of us like milk in our Tea, others do not. Some of us like to take it with sugar, others prefer lemon, and so on.

In other countries they have even stranger ways of drinking Tea.

In Cashmere a beverage called "Cha Tulch" is prepared from the Tea by boiling the leaves in a tin-lined copper pot to a strong dark decoction and while boiling briskly, phule (red potash), aniseed and a little salt is added after which it is poured into a kettle and finally served in porcelain cups.

It is also prepared there in a vessel termed "chajos" . . . a kettle and teapot combined . . . and poured direct into the cups, but is used only after meals . . . more particularly after the morning repast . . . the morning meal consisting of this decoction and some plain biscuit served hot.

Another preparation known as "Churned Tea" made in a similar manner but afterwards regularly churned like milk is highly prized among them, being used exclusively for entertaining visitors.