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How to appreciate Chinese tea

Vivian Mak

Tea plays a major role in Chinese culture, almost becoming an additional member of the Chinese family. While *pu'er*, *sau mei*, *shui xian*, *teguanyin* and jasmine tea are popular in Hong Kong and widely served in Chinese restaurants, there is still a tremendous variety tea. And appreciating Chinese tea has become an art-form in itself.

The first step is to select the best tea leaf. Many factors affect a leaf's quality, including the plant's DNA, location, production process and year of production. A way to judge a tea's character is by its appearance and storage environment. A good tea leaf should have a complete branch, *oolong* tea (which produces varieties such as *wuyi* supreme, phoenix *oolong* and *teguanyin*) in particular, has to be tightly rolled in small semi-balls. In terms of storage, since a tea leaf's taste is easily affected by humidity, sealed individual packages are more effective than storage in a glass jar, except for *pu'er* and tea cake.

Strong light also adversely affects the quality of tea leaves. Green teas such as *longjin* and jasmine-scented tea, along with white teas such as silver needle and white peony, will become darker after absorbing strong light, or even go black. Other dark-coloured tea leaves will not change in appearance, but their flavour might go off.

I suggest tasting the same tea in different shops to educate your palate towards this type of tea, while identifying its aroma, smoothness, taste and minty bitterness. It does take time and effort to classify the quality of each tea type, but I think it's a good way to share your opinion with other tea lovers.

To make a good cup of tea, a good tea leaf is a basic requirement, but water is also extremely important during the tea-making process. Tap water in Hong Kong is fine to use as it contains less minerals than mineral water. Some mineral waters may even have sludge and change colour after boiling.

The ideal way to boil water is to heat it to the required temperature, or cool down the hot water, but never re-boil hot water as the water texture will change and it will lose some of its healthy properties. Depending on the tea, you will get the best flavour with different water temperatures: green tea and white tea at 75°C to 85°C; *oolong* tea at 85°C to 95°C; red tea at 95°C to 100°C; black tea at 100°C. You can use a kitchen thermometer to measure the temperature, or if you can have a glass kettle, you can check the amount of bubbles at the required temperature, so that you do not need to use a thermometer next time.



Whichever tea you choose, you need the right proportion of tea, water and time. According to my experience, if the ratio of the weight of tea and water is 1:50, the first brewing time is one minute, and the subsequent brewing time is increased by 1/3 more than the previous brewing. For example, if I pour three grams of tea leaves into 150ml of water, the first brewing takes one minute, the second one requires one minute and 20 seconds; if I use six grams of tea leaves, then the first brewing time is 30 seconds and the second time requires only 40 seconds.

Tea wares also react to different kinds of tea. Porcelain tea wares are suitable for green tea, white tea, light styled *oolong* tea and flower scented tea, as porcelain speeds up the heat displacement. *Yixing* clay teapots are suitable for making strong *oolong* tea, red tea and black tea, because these teas require higher water temperature, and these teapots are efficient at preserving heat while the small holes in the clay prevent tea leaves from burning under high temperature. Serving tea in a small porcelain *gaiwan* can allow faster heat displacement and slow down the rate of aroma loss.

I believe everyone should have their own favourite cup of tea, if you have not found yours, then you owe it to yourself to find one! ■

如何品嚐中國茶

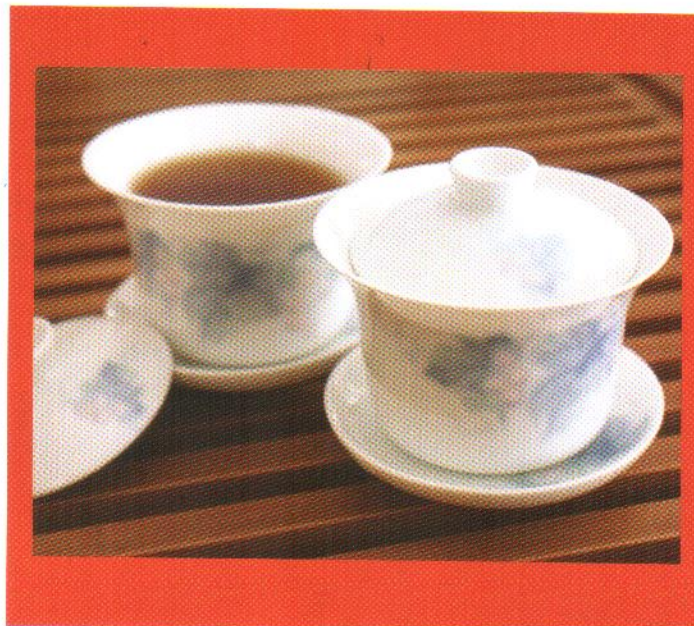
茶在中國文化中是不可或缺的一部分，甚至是每家每戶的必需品。其實除了香港人所熟悉的普洱、壽眉、水仙、香片和鐵觀音等，這些在茶樓供應的茶葉之外，尚有很多不同種類和味道的茶葉以供選擇，而品嚐中國茶本身亦已成為一門高深的藝術。

第一個步驟就是挑選品質優良的茶葉。影響茶葉質素的原因極多，如樹種、產地、製法、年份和貯存狀況等。如果不太熟悉某種茶葉的特性，我們選購時可就其外觀和貯存狀況作判斷。就外觀而言，優質的茶葉都必定枝條完整，烏龍茶（如大紅袍、鳳凰單叢、鐵觀音）更要捲得緊緻。貯存方面，茶葉容易受潮，所以密封獨立包裝的茶葉要比放在大瓶子的要好（除了普洱和緊壓茶）。

茶葉也容易受光線影響，綠茶（如龍井、茉莉花茶）和白茶（白毫銀針、白牡丹）受光後顏色會變深，甚至變黑。其他茶葉因為本身顏色較深，受光後變化雖然不手顯，但味道亦可能已經變壞。

選購時，建議大家可到不同店子試飲比較同一款茶葉，目的是要累積對它的味覺經驗，熟悉味道以後，就可以細心比較茶的香、滑、味道和回甘。當然，味覺是需要鍛鍊的，要明確分辨茶葉的品質，我們需要時間和細心，與不同茗茶的人分享意見亦是一種好方法。

要泡出一壺上乘的茶，茶葉是基本條件，而水在泡茶的過程中也擔當一個相當重要的位置。香港的自來水沒有太多礦物質，使用一個優質的濾水器來濾走雜質和氯的氣味就可以了，但若果使用礦泉水則要小心，因為有些礦泉水加熱後會變色和有沉澱物。最理想的燒水方法，是將生水加熱至所需的溫度或把煮沸了的水降溫，但不要把放涼了的熱水再次煮沸，因為水的質感會變差，亦對身體無益。一般來說，水溫與茶的發酵程度成正比：綠茶和白茶大概為攝氏七十五度至八十五度；烏龍茶則由攝氏八十五度至九十五度；紅茶為攝氏九十五度至一百度；黑茶為一百度。我們可以使用廚房專用的電子溫度計來量度水溫。如果有玻璃水煲，則可以從外觀觀察在水加熱到以上溫度時，還剩下多少水，然後記住，以後就不必再用溫度計量度水溫了。



無論泡甚麼茶，都要注意茶、水和時間的比例。依我經驗，假如茶與水的重量比例是一比五十，第一泡的沖泡時間是一分鐘，隨後每泡則要比前一泡增加三分一時間。例如容量一百五十毫升的茶壺，假如我用三克茶葉，第一泡可以浸一分鐘，第二泡浸一分二十秒；假如用六克茶葉，第一泡浸半分鐘，第二泡浸四十秒就可以了。

茶具要與茶的性質配合。就味道而言，綠茶、白茶、清香烏龍茶和花茶可用瓷器茶具，取其散熱快。濃香烏龍茶、紅茶和黑茶要以高溫沖泡，改宜用紫砂茶壺，因為保溫性強，而紫砂物料的微小氣孔有助透氣，茶葉不會被高溫燬壞。杯子最好用瓷器，宜小不宜大，而且散熱較快，香氣流失較少。

我相信每一個人都應有其杯中茶，若然你尚未找到，那便要好好花時間和心思去發掘，之後就可以感受一下茗茶箇中的樂趣。■





Edmon Leong

Born and raised in Calgary, Canada, Edmon has travelled around the world and has made his base in Hong Kong for the past six years. Edmon's passion is firmly rooted in the very first fashion magazine that caught his eye. In fashion photography, whether it be in the studio or on location, Edmon is able to find perfect images amidst the choreography and the chaos. He captures the best angles from the seven elements available to him: composition, lighting, set, subject, style, makeup and hair. In this issue, Edmon will feature two of his weddings in our inFrame section.

Edmon 於加拿大 Calgary 長大，熱愛到世界各地旅遊及拍攝，過去六年則以香港為發展基地。Edmon 對攝影的熱愛始於第一本吸引他注意的時裝雜誌，無論是室內還是戶外的時裝攝影，他都能在忙亂中拍到完美的影像。他可以從構圖、燈光、場景、主題、造型、化妝和髮型這七大元素中找到最美的角度。今期，Edmon 將會在 inFrame 跟大家分享他的作品。



Vivian Mak

Vivian is the founder of MingCha, and is a person deeply interested in Chinese culture and dedicated to extolling the praises of Chinese tea. In this issue, Vivian shares with us her knowledge of Chinese tea appreciation.

麥惠蘭是明茶房的創辦人，熱愛中國文化的她立志要將茶這種中國文化精髓的最真實面貌帶到國際。今期，她與大家分享茗茶的學問與興趣。



Joyce Chan

Joyce currently works at The Swank as a buyer in the Ladies' division, overseeing more than 30 worldwide labels. She knows the hottest items in fashion, and this month she shares her insight into the current trends for women's swimwear.

Joyce 是詩韻女裝部的時裝買手，看管超過三十個國際品牌。本月，熟悉時裝潮流的她，將為大家講述今季女裝泳裝的趨勢。