

TRENDING TEA IN T.O.

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VIBRANT LEAVES are plucked off lively bushes and gathered in foreign lands. These leaves are then dried, sometimes crushed and steeped into billions of cups around the world. The aroma and taste of these leaves deliver our senses into places unknown. Tea has been transformed over the past centuries becoming one of the common drinks of choice. Today, tea is not only considered for its many health benefits; it's also acclaimed for its social properties as well as hundreds of unique flavours.

According to the Tea Association of Canada, Canadians drink around nine billion cups of tea each year. Additionally, the organization has found that specialty tea has gained a notable increase and has acquired 60 per cent of the market share today.

In Toronto, there are many teashops and cafes catering to a wide variety of cultures. With more than 25 years in the business, Marisha Golla runs one of Toronto's teashops, House of Tea, located on Yonge Street. Being Sri Lankan, Golla has grown with

the tea industry. Her profession includes being a tea taster, someone who has been trained in the ability to grade specific teas.

Golla has seen a wide array of people from different origins and ages come into her shop. She explains the important difference between loose and bagged teas. “Tea comes from different countries and they are accordingly graded and then sold,” says Golla. “When they manufacture this amount of tea there is some remaining which is called sweepings and that is what goes into tea bags.”

Grace Ursini has been in the tea industry since 2009. Instead of specializing in a teashop, Ursini developed a catering business in the GTA. “I love tea and I love social gatherings so I thought this was something different that people could do for a celebration or an event,” says Ursini. Ursini's business, Totally Tea, has catered to all sorts of occasions such as bridal showers, anniversaries, birthday parties and even graduations.

Ursini explains that the typical tea party would last around



two hours, which includes a buffet complete with fine china and silverware.

She adds that the main reason for planning a modern tea party is to be able to engage with your company. “Not only are you the host but you can also be a part of the party without having to worry about running in and out or setting up tables. You can enjoy your guests.”

Ursini has seen first-hand the rapid growth in the tea industry because of how fast her business has boomed. “The tea trend is hot now, judging by my business and it’s not just for women.”

She hopes to branch out into the corporate world and has even seen an increase in younger crowds tired of going to bars, asking for birthday tea parties. “Young people are really enjoying it. It’s not just restricted to showers anymore,” she said.

According to the Canadian Food Trends of 2020, tea is expected to grow in the food and drink industry over the next decade due to its added health benefits as a hot beverage.

Alyssa Garrison, head of marketing at Tealish in Toronto, highlighted the several different types of tea and their added health benefits. “At Tealish, there are seven different types of tea including oolong, white, green and black that all come from the Camellia Sinensis plant grown in different places and processed in different ways,” says Garrison. “Black tea is fermented with the least amount of health benefits, but it’s good for coffee drinkers.”

Garrison adds that green tea is high in anti-oxidants while white tea is the least processed of teas, giving it the highest number of health benefits. “Every single tea has different health benefits,” says Garrison. Raspberry leaf tea is high in iron. The African red tea bush has no caffeine in it. It’s a natural anti-inflammatory and it also a good hydrator, which is really good if you’re hung over or have cramps.”

She believes that tea is particularly popular today because of an overall sense of health concerns. She explains that the increase in more modern teashops in Toronto has led to more of an exciting atmosphere. “Now, with lots of exciting blends, there’s something for everybody. There’s a whole world of tea to explore.” ♦



HISTORY OF TEA

Anna, The Seventh Duchess of Bedford, is credited with the invention of high afternoon tea, after she asked maids to bring her tea and sandwiches in between meals for her and her friends.

The Japanese tea ceremony involves the art of preparation and presentation of Matcha, a powdered green tea and is still practiced today.

According to the Tea Association of Canada, Chinese Emperor Shen Nung discovered tea in 2737 B.C., when a leaf fell into the bowl of hot water he was drinking.

In India, tea has been used for medicinal properties dating back to 500 BCE.