



Traditional Chinese Medicine and the Culture of Tea

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Abstract

Tea has a rich history that spans from the traditional small cup Gongfu tea to the popular Taiwanese-style tea enjoyed by young people. The culture of tea drinking seems to have never waned. Tea is omnipresent in our lives, often associated with quenching thirst and providing a refreshing boost. However, few take the time to delve into the culture of tea or understand its potential benefits for our bodies.

Discussing the Attributes of Tea:

In general, tea has a bitter-sweet taste and a slightly cold nature. However, different varieties of tea exhibit distinct characteristics. In China, there are approximately over 1000 types of tea leaves. If we associate tea colors with the five elements, they can be broadly categorized as green tea, black tea, yellow tea, white tea, and oolong tea. Green tea corresponds to the wood element and has a more invigorating effect on the mind. However, it is slightly cold in nature, so individuals with weak spleen and stomach should consume it with caution. Representing green tea is the famous Bi Luo Chun. Red tea corresponds to the fire element and is relatively warmer compared to other types of tea. It aids in digestion and helps alleviate gastrointestinal issues. Ceylon tea is a well-known example of red tea. Yellow tea corresponds to the earth element and has a stronger sweet and mild nature. It helps regulate the middle burner and is represented by Huo Shan Huang Ya. White tea corresponds to the metal element and possesses the ability to reduce qi. It shares a similar cold nature with green tea and is effective in dispelling heat and phlegm. Silver Needle represents white tea. Lastly, black tea corresponds to the water element and has the characteristic of moisturizing and descending. It helps generate body fluids and aids in digestion. Pu-erh tea is a representative of black tea. While these colors provide a general classification, the specific attributes of each type of tea depend on factors such as origin, taste, and roasting techniques, making it difficult to generalize [1].

Exploring the Health Benefits of Tea:

What are the specific benefits of tea? According to the "Compendium of Materia Medica" (Bencao Gangmu), tea has a bitter-sweet taste, a slightly cold nature, and possesses properties such as diuresis, heat-clearing, thirst-quenching, promoting alertness, invigorating the spirit, and aiding digestion. Due to its cooling nature, tea can clear heat, promote urination, and relieve summer heat. It also aids

in digestion and helps alleviate digestive stagnation. Moreover, it can clear and invigorate the mind, thereby enhancing mental acuity [2].

Important Considerations for Tea Consumption:

Ancient wisdom offers two guiding principles for tea consumption: it should be consumed hot and in moderation. Since tea has a cooling nature, excessive consumption is not advisable. Drinking tea in a hot temperature helps mitigate its cooling effects. Cold drinks, on the other hand, may cause phlegm (Tan) retention. It is even advised not to drink tea on an empty stomach to avoid potential harm to the spleen and stomach [3].

In conclusion, the culture of tea drinking is deeply rooted in Chinese traditions and continues to thrive. Understanding the attributes and potential health benefits of different teas can enhance our appreciation for this ancient beverage. By adhering to the principles of consuming tea in moderation and at an appropriate temperature, we can fully embrace the essence of tea culture while safeguarding our well-being.

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