

Tea time

Ways to use tea in your food

by FIONA YOUNG-BROWN



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Millions of people around the world enjoy drinking tea and take advantage of the health benefits it brings. Just one cup a day can provide antioxidants that may help prevent inflammation and protect against heart disease.

However, have you ever tried cooking with tea? Tea can be used in a number of different ways to add a subtle flavour to everything from soups and barbecue rubs to cakes, smoothies and even cocktails.

Wet or dry?

The beauty of tea is that it can be used in both liquid and dry forms when cooking, making it a truly versatile ingredient. As a brew, tea can be switched with water or broth when poaching fish, or you can use it for cooking everything from oatmeal to pasta. Simply add a teabag to your cooking water when making pasta or rice. (Don't forget to remove it before serving.)

Alternatively, tea can be used as a dry addition. Grind the leaves and use them as a rub on meats, sprinkle them over roasting vegetables, or add them to existing spice mixes. For a subtle addition, add ground tea to regular table salt. Or, mix some ground leaves into butter to serve on steak.

Different teas for different dishes

With a plethora of different teas available, you want to use the right tea for your

dish. Green tea's subtle taste makes it an excellent substitute for water or broth when cooking quinoa or rice, while delicate white tea is perfect for steaming or poaching.

Matcha is a powdered green tea that contains up to 10 times more antioxidants than regular black tea, making it a nutritional powerhouse in cooking. It also has a much stronger flavour than leaf green tea, so use it sparingly. Matcha is wonderful for use in desserts, pairing well with white chocolate. Use it in the same way you would cacao powder and add it to cakes, cookies, frosting, ice cream and smoothies.

There are many varieties of black tea, so feel free to experiment with different blends. Your everyday Tetley or PG Tips can be used for everything from soaking raisins for a fruit cake to augmenting a brine for meats (just add several teabags to the brining water). You could even add a splash of a strong brew to some stir-fried vegetables along with soy sauce. Earl Grey, with its hints of citrus, works well in desserts and baked goods.

Once you start cooking with tea, you'll be pleasantly surprised at just how much flavour it can add. We Brits love our tea, so let's use it for more than a cuppa. ■

Fiona Young-Brown is a writer, author and food historian. Originally from Ramsgate, Kent, she now lives in the US.