

Indonesian people not only enjoy drinking coffee but also have a fondness for tea, which is evident from the increasing popularity of "Teh Solo" (Solo Tea). Due to its popularity, many people purchase authentic Solo-brewed tea as souvenirs or for personal consumption. To boost sales, many tea shops use the "Teh Solo" label as a marketing strategy. This has led to the question: When did the culture of drinking tea start to gain prominence in Indonesia?

It's not surprising to see the increasing trend of tea consumption in Indonesia, considering that Indonesia is one of the largest tea-producing countries in the world. According to [ekon.go.id](http://ekon.go.id), Indonesia has the fifth largest tea plantation area in the world, covering 107,905 hectares as of 2020. That year, Indonesia's total tea production was ranked 8th globally, totaling 138,323 tons.

Apart from the data, the emergence of drinking tea culture in Indonesia cannot be separated from the Dutch during the colonial period. According to [jelajah.kompas.id](http://jelajah.kompas.id), the tea trend in Indonesia began with Japan's *Camellia Sinensis* tea plant, which was brought to Indonesia in 1684.

From there, tea finally became a crop that Indonesian people planted on privately owned and rented land. Even though it seems "forced," since then, tea has begun to become a part of people's lives. In other words, everyone can enjoy tea freely without age or social class restrictions.



Photo: Illustration of *ngeteh* at angkringan, which seems to be a tradition in Solo (Shutterstock/Odua Images)

## From the Kingdom, Angkringan, and Local Communities

Many people attribute the emergence of tea culture to England. The reason is that England has a culture of drinking tea in the afternoon accompanied by snacks, or what is known as afternoon tea. The culture of drinking tea in Indonesia emerged long before that. In the past, the culture of drinking tea was only practiced by nobles or the royal family. One example is the culture of drinking tea in Solo City, Central Java. Before the trend of Teh Solo and "*angkringan*" tea emerged, it turns out that the culture of drinking tea in Solo had been around since the royal era.

According to *soloraya.solopos.com*, Heri Priyatmoko, a history lecturer at Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, revealed that in the past, every noble family banquet in the Javanese royal tradition always served tea. One proof of this is the habit of Paku Buwana X, who several times entertained the King of Thailand by serving him a cup of tea in a very polite manner.

As time and era progressed, the *Teh Solo* culture, initially only limited to the kingdom, began to spread and develop among the wider community, regardless of social status. Drinking tea has become the local wisdom of the people of Solo City. It can be seen from the many *angkringan* (stalls) and tea shops serving delicious blends of brewed tea.

## The Tradition of Drinking Tea in Various Regions



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The culture of drinking tea is also practiced in Tegal, Central Java. Tegal is known for its tradition of serving tea in clay teapots as one of the tea-producing regions. The teapot tradition in Tegal involves brewing strong tea with rock crystal sugar. When served, the teapot creates the taste of "*nasgitel*" tea, aka *panas* (hot), *legi* (sweet), and *kenthel* (thick).

The Betawi people also have a unique cultural tradition of drinking tea, known as the "*nyahi*" tradition. This tradition involves drinking tea in the morning and evening, served in a tin teapot with coconut sugar. Coconut sugar is not stirred into tea; it is bitten first and followed by a sip of warm tea.