

A HOLISTIC LOOK AT FOOD, HEALTH AND BEAUTY

## well-being



### TEA

**tastemaker**  
a wunderkind tea  
importer

**health**  
why tea is  
good for you

### tea spectrum

All tea comes from the *Camellia sinensis* bush, but there are many ways in which tea can be grown, harvested and processed. The altitude of the farm makes a difference in the flavor of the tea, as do such factors as soil type; when the tea is picked; whether buds, leaves or both are picked; how the tea is withered, rolled, sifted or otherwise handled; and whether it is fermented. The best way to sort through the dizzying array of tea varieties is to taste the five basic types, from delicate to robust. **White tea** has a sweet taste and a fragrance reminiscent of chestnuts. **Green tea** ranges from clear, sweet and flowery to iridescent and bittersweet to nutty with a buttery texture. **Oolong tea**, the complex one, offers a nearly infinite spectrum of colors, aromas and flavors. Almost as varied, **black tea** can be full-bodied or light and crisp. Rare, aged **pu-erh tea** has the pungent aroma of wet leaves. —Jane Sigal

**TEA PH.D.** Like a lot of new college graduates, Joshua Kaiser spent time traveling. But while others backpacked from Paris to Prague, Kaiser studied rare and unusual varieties of tea in mainland China, Taiwan and Japan. A year later, in 1997, he founded Rishi Tea. Rishi means “pioneer,” roughly, in Sanskrit; Kaiser is the first to bring to America varieties such as Organic Yunnan Golden Needle, a black tea with a sweet malty finish (\$5 an ounce), and Plum Blossom, an oolong tea scented by the plum trees grown alongside the bushes (\$20 an ounce). He even flies home to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with bags of tea in his luggage. Unlike tea importers who depend on middlemen, Kaiser has developed close relationships with producers. “Most tea makers are not just farmers, they’re calligraphers, Yixing fortune tellers, antiques collectors, even university professors,” he says. Kaiser, who calls himself “a student of tea,” is eager to keep learning (866-747-4483 or [www.rishi-tea.com](http://www.rishi-tea.com)). —Susan Choung

PORTRAIT BY ERIC OGDEN

Excerpted and adapted from the January 2002 issue of Food & Wine magazine.  
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