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PRODUCED BY KRISSA ROSSBUND PHOTOGRAPHY BY PETER KRUHMARDT & BLAINE MOATS

hot **commoditea**



The Palm Court at The Plaza chose a cobalt blue-and-24-karat-gold pattern during its recent renovation. "Grace" cup and saucer, \$230; teapot, \$641; Bernardaud (800/884-7775).

COMFORT INFUSED WITH DISCOVERY— **TEA IS BREWING IN OUR CULTURE**

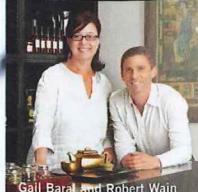
Always well-bred in its presentation, tea in the United States during recent decades has been a rather low-profile drink—despite ranking only behind water as the most consumed beverage in the world. Of late, designer coffee—latte, cappuccino, espresso—has been the big star. But now tea is regaining its No. 1 status. Its growing popularity in the United States was evidenced at last year's G-20 Summit in Pittsburgh, where First Lady Michelle Obama presented delightful ➤

purple-and-platinum porcelain tea sets crafted by Pickard China as gifts for the spouses of visiting dignitaries.

The taking of tea has a certain inclusive elegance that transcends global boundaries. It is also becoming a trend in the design world, from tea-stained fabrics to fashionable tea accoutrements.

While the nuances of tea flavors might be lost on an untrained palate, distinctions among tea accessories are easy to see—from hand-enamelled glasses in Morocco and petite cups sans handles in the Far East to Brown Betty earthenware in England and porcelain teapots in the United States.

"Cuisine from region to region changes, based on ingredients and ➤



MARTEANI

6 ounces jasmine green tea

4 ounces unsweetened

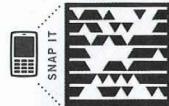
pomegranate juice

4 ounces premium vodka

Dash of simple syrup

In cocktail shaker filled with ice cubes, combine ingredients. Garnish as desired, with lime twist, gold-leaf flake, or tiny red currants. Makes two (7-ounce) drinks.

Created by Gail Baral and Robert Wain for Fête du Thé by Algarab.



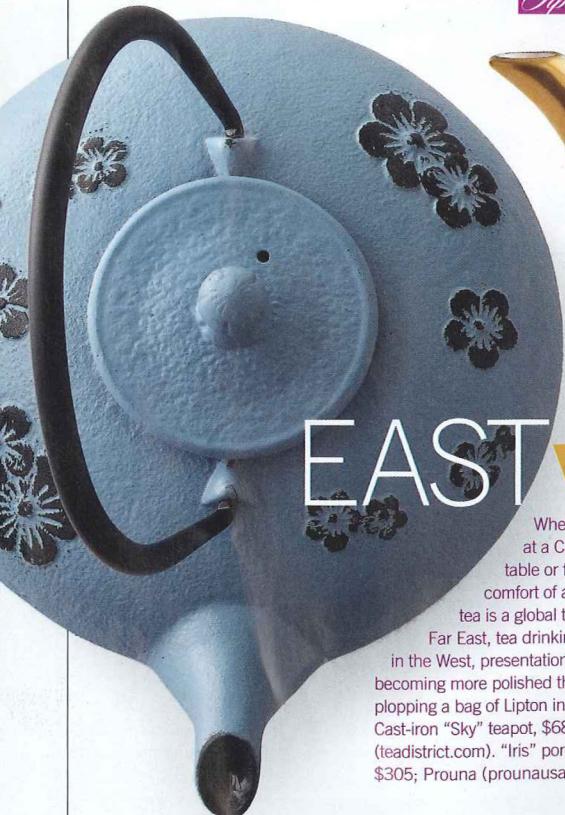
Tip Clip

FOR MORE TEA-INFUSED
recipes by Algarab, go to gettag.mobi on your smartphone and download the free Tag Reader app. Hold your phone over this coded tag and snap it. For best quality, access a Wi-Fi network. You can also view the video by visiting traditionalhome.com.



EAST vs WEST

Whether sipped at a Chinese Kang table or from the comfort of an armchair, tea is a global tradition. In the Far East, tea drinking is a ritual; in the West, presentation is finally becoming more polished than simply plopping a bag of Lipton into a mug. Cast-iron "Sky" teapot, \$68; Tea District (teadistrict.com). "Iris" porcelain teapot, \$305; Prouna (prounauisa.com).



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Stainless calibrated timer for tea, \$20; The Republic of Tea (republicoftea.com).

TEA IS THE
SECOND MOST
CONSUMED
BEVERAGE IN
THE WORLD,
AFTER WATER.



Ceramic mugs with infusers, \$20; Harney & Sons (harney.com). "Tropical" striped mug with lid, \$120 for set of two; Richard Ginori (800/215-1193).



Sugar is suitable, but a spoonful of honey hits the sweet spot, too; \$5-\$24; Savannah Bee Company (savannahbee.com).



ICY HAUTE

Pretty to look at, lovely to whiff, and pleasing to the palate, gourmet iced teas are undeniably refreshing. With an array of floral flavors such as rose petal, hibiscus, and passion fruit available, iced tea is rather like a garden in a glass.
"Biasca" iced tea jug, \$45; Bodum; with "Raspberry Rose Petal" loose tea from Teas Etc (teasetc.com).

For more tea products and information, visit **traditionalhome.com**



"New Canteen" double-wall porcelain cups with silicone grip come in three sizes and 11 fashionable colors; starting at \$15; Bodum (bodum.com).

Multitasking is easy with this dual-spout teapot in dogwood—it pours two cups at the same time; \$115; Marla Dawn (818/980-4484).



"George II" mahogany tilt-top table with molded brass edges, \$1,896; Theodore Alexander (theodorealexander.com).



THE TEA SALON

Tracy Stern's modern New York shop, Salon Tea, offers not only the beverage, but also tea-based skin-care products, making tea glamorous as well as elegant. Visit salontea.com.



Tip Clip

MEET TRACY IN HER slice of tea heaven. Go to gettag.mobi on your smartphone and download the free Tag Reader app. Hold your phone over this coded tag and snap it. For best quality, access a Wi-Fi network. You can also view the video by visiting traditionalhome.com.



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food preparation," explains Steve Schwartz, master tea blender for his award-winning business, The Art of Tea. "But with tea, it's all about the ceremonial aspect, and that exists no matter the culture," he says.

Evocative of Chinese dynasties and English aristocracy, gourmet tea shops are sprouting up in American cities, with interiors that glamorize tea as today's affordable luxury. ▶

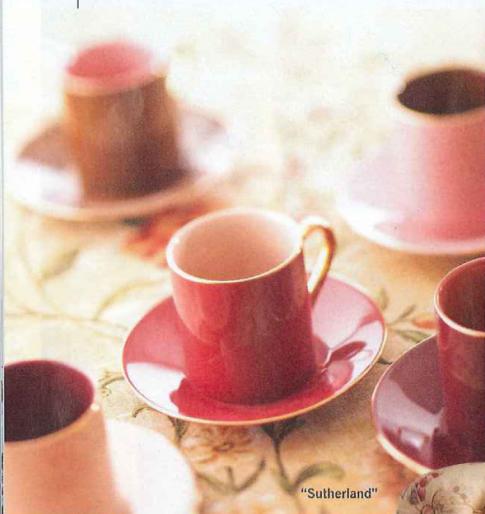


The "Grand Tour" entertainment cabinet is stunning with its mix of materials from mother-of-pearl pulls to an ebonized hardwood frame, and inlaid parchment panels, \$2,985; Century Furniture (centuryfurniture.com).



LOOSE AND LOVELY

Loose tea once had its inconveniences, but a host of chic and sexy pots, infusers that keep the tiniest tea leaves contained, and stylish scoops make it easy to serve tea handsomely, whether hot or cold. Bamboo scoop, \$8; Rishi Tea (rishi-tea.com), with "1000 Cranes Blend" tea; Teas Etc (teasetc.com).



"Sutherland"



AGED IN ELEGANCE

Old age has never looked so divine. Tea dying is a centuries-old technique used to antique fabrics and papers into maturity.

Tufted slipper chair, \$3,420; Baker (baker.com), with "Salzburg" linen fabric from Bennison (bennisonfabrics.com).

Linen fabrics, above right, all from Lee Jofa (leejofa.com). "Aubergine" teacups, \$60 for six (yedihouseware.com).



CELEBRATING THE SIP

In 1945, Ruth Bigelow didn't stop designing—she just stopped designing interiors. The decorator swapped swatches for spices and orange peel to concoct Constant Comment, which celebrates its 65th birthday this year. The packaging has changed, but the recipe remains the same. The original sepia-toned tin is shown above (bigelowtea.com).

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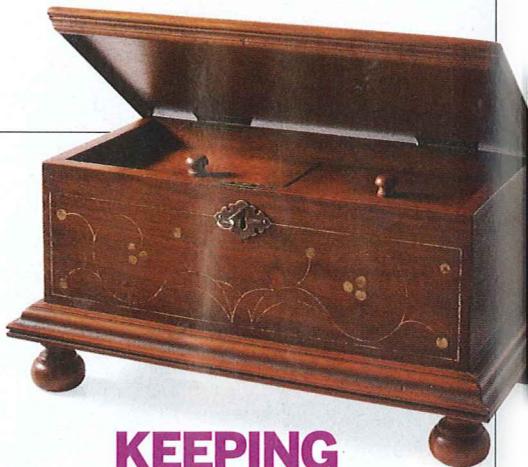
Washi paper tea tins, \$10 each; Rishi Tea (rishi-tea.com). Bags make enjoying a cup of loose tea easy; \$11 for 100 (numitea.com). "Fruta Bomba" tea, \$6.80 for 2 ounces (teavana.com).



Just ask Tracy Stern. Salon Tea, her shop on NYC's Upper East Side, has a different vibe than the formal Palm Court at The Plaza Hotel, famous for its Afternoon Tea. Her shop takes a dazzling and fashionable twist on tradition—think hot pink walls, disco ball lighting, and sleek trays on which she serves teas in alluring flavors.

"I love the elegance of the tea ritual and treat tea as the elite merchandise that it once was," Tracy says.

Lemon slices ready. Steam rising. Pinkies up. Enjoy a cuppa! ➤



KEEPING COOL

To keep tea at optimal freshness, use storage that limits exposure to light and heat.

Hand-painted tea caddy with 22-karat gold decoration, above, is crafted of solid walnut; \$529, CF Style Designs (cfstyledesigns.com).

TEA FOR EVERY TASTE

There is a tea to suit every taste, and, like a paint deck, the slightest variation makes all the difference.



Black tea
"Hot Cinnamon Spice"
Harney & Sons



White tea
"Plum Berry White Tea"
Rishi Tea



Herbal tea
"Wild Orange Blossom"
Teavana



Oolong tea
"Six Summits"
Teavana



Organic tea
"Chamomile Citrus"
Choice Organic Teas



Green tea
"Organic Green Tea Mint"
Rishi Tea



Matcha tea
"Ginger Matcha"
Art of Tea



Rooibos tea
"Italian Blood Orange"
Art of Tea