

A naturally caffeine-free tea plant is discovered

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| <p>Notes &amp; Cues:</p> | <p>Article:</p> <p>The world loves a cuppa. Even though it takes just a few grams for a brew-up, some 3m tonnes of tea are consumed every year. And tea can be good for you, as it contains compounds that help to lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. But there is a downside. Tea contains caffeine which, although it improves mental alertness, can also cause anxiety, insomnia and other problems.</p> <p>What would be agreeable is a tea plant that provides all the taste and goodness but with little or none of the caffeine. Liang Chen and Ji-Qiang Jin of the Tea Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences think they have found just such a plant growing wild in a remote area in Fujian province, southern China. As they report in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, not only is the tea plant naturally caffeine-free but it also contains a number of unique medicinal compounds that, the locals believe, offer considerable health benefits.</p> <p>Known locally as Hongyacha, the newly discovered plant grows only between 700 and 1, 000 metres above sea level around a handful of Chinese alpine villages.</p> <p>The researchers are now exploring methods to protect Hongyacha in its natural habitat while further studies are carried out. It can take time—and sometimes it does not work—for new plant varieties to be bred for commercial use. A pair of naturally caffeine-free coffee plants were discovered in 2003, but little progress has been reported. Tea enthusiasts will be watching Hongyacha with interest. And others will wonder what else is out there.</p> |
| <p>Summary:</p>          |   |