



Mary's Medley

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MARCH...in like a LION, out like a LAMB!

Dear Friends~

We have finally reached March! I can say that my customers are trying to believe that it is spring. Time will tell. I haven't seen my crocuses pop their pretty heads through to greet me at my back door. However, as hardy as those little crocuses are, they would have to jackhammer their way through the ice pack that remains. I believe that we will see robins, crocus, and other harbingers of spring very soon! Don't you? It can't be too far away. Let's keep telling ourselves that.

**Happy March and Spring,
Mary**

IN the NEWS ...and SETTING the RECORD STRAIGHT:

Tea is a hot topic. No pun intended, but tea creates a stir (pun intended) whether in the general, health, food & beverage or social news. Most recently, we have been reading and seeing advertisements for **white tea**. Have you seen the little Chinese man standing in the tea garden? Not recently? Good. Have you been hearing about **red tea**? Lots of easy reading or popular press magazines have been promoting both of these teas. I feel compelled to correct the erroneous information that is being put before you.

White tea is pleasing to drink. With a quick steep time and a light uncomplicated taste, white tea is processed and does contain caffeine. But, what is **white tea**?

First a quick lesson...the botanical name for the tea is Camellia sinensis. If I may, I would like to compare Camellia Sinensis with lycopersicon esculentum, tomatoes. Each genus has many varieties. Not all varieties produce the same type of edible product. In the case of tomatoes, the edible product may be a yellow, pink, ugly, red, large, tiny, fleshy, slicing size, commercial or consumer variety. This only touches on the primary varieties that are familiar to us.

Now, **tea** has many different varieties, too. The differences in the final product, though, have to do with 2 basics. First, environmental,

where is it grown? China, India, Ceylon, Kenya? Secondly, how is it processed? Steamed, pan-fried, fermented/oxidized?

The white tea variety, while growing, has buds and leaves that are silvery in color tending to be white and have on them, fuzz. White tea is processed in a similar fashion as green tea, however, slightly less, in order to retain the white “peach fuzz.” Because of the type of processing, white tea is actually a green tea.

Yes, white tea does contain slightly more antioxidants than green tea because of the processing procedure and only for that reason.

Red tea in the tea business is actually **black tea**. Yes, I wrote black tea. It seems that contemporary society and the rooibos advocates have chosen to call rooibos “red tea” and advertise it as such. Why is black tea called red tea and what is rooibos if not tea?

The Chinese named the teas by color. **Green tea** so named is obvious. Oolong tea is **blue tea** and the processed leaves have varying degrees of this color from green-blue to blue-black. Black tea’s name, **red tea**, is not obvious until it is steeped. Then the beautiful range of red color appears, from coppery golds to rich deep burgundies.

Rooibos (pronounced, roy-bus) is South African red bush. It is very high in Vitamin C, therefore, and excellent source of antioxidants. However, rooibos is not tea at all but rather classified as an herbal. The beverage is made from dried and fermented leaves from the bush. The indigenous people of South Africa have used rooibos for centuries. It has been marketed in the USA since 1961 under the name Kaffree™ and most recently as red tea.

Enjoy drinking both or your choice but just be aware of what you are drinking. Just know that hot beverages, if not cocoa or coffee, are called tea. Remember: always read the ingredients label.

Questions about white tea or rooibos or anything tea related? Feel free to contact me at: <mailto:anearlyelegance@pa.net>

~ tea ~

Question of the Month: Does white tea have less caffeine than green **and** does green tea have less caffeine than oolong and black?

Answer: Remember that all 3 types of tea, green, oolong, black, (all other teas are subsets of these) come from the camellia sinensis plant. Therefore, basically, all teas have the same amount of caffeine. It is the length of the steeping time that creates the amount of caffeine per cup. It stands to reason, white tea has less caffeine than green, which has less caffeine than oolong or black. **AND**, by the way, no matter how you steep it, brew it, slice it or dice it...**TEA still has approximately two-thirds less caffeine per cup than coffee has per cup!**

~ tea ~