



Tea Trails

THE PLANTERS SOCIETY OF EASTERN INDIA

Wishing all our members and their family a very happy & safe 2023 !

GOOD PRACTICES



It is once again a pleasure to wish all members of the Tea Community a great 2022 and beyond. Whilst an improvement over 2021, the overhang of Covid still exists and the need to be watchful and disciplined continues. On the whole we did brilliantly to forestall Covid.

As we look back if there is one truism it is that Quality has never let the Tea Industry down. Crops may decline 2 to 3 percent, more the latter, than the former, due to weather and fine plucking, but prices would be stable and at times attractive with quality as a focus. This is a time tested formula. Quality in the sphere of production never lets you down.

Looking beyond, Consistency is

another important part in the quality chain. Consistent quality puts the Producer on the podium of reliability in the eyes of the Buyer & the Consumer.

Enough said on this subject, my Salaams to the Great Indian Planter! My very best for a great season, where Quantity, Quality & Consistency will find their own equilibrium and space.

As in the Seasons of Tea so too in the Seasons of Life, Equilibrium, Quality & Consistency Always! Quantity will follow !

With Best Wishes,

C.S. Bedi
President



From the Editor



Dear Readers,
Dear Readers,

We are back with our second edition of Tea Trails for this year. This time round we've gone nostalgic, with our articles and photographs with a dash of humour, as a planter's life is never without a tickle to the funny bone. Priceless handwritten recipes, old bungalows, All this and more! Hope you enjoy this Trail.

We have added our Planters Society of Eastern India group to Facebook so please do become members and contribute to it.

My heartfelt thanks to Brenda Dennis and Joy Deep Ghosh for their invaluable and spontaneous help in putting this issue together.

Kiran Grover
Editor

Our website "www.planterssociety.com" is up and running for all to see. There is a blog space to put up a blog or share thoughts on tea life. We would love to see your inputs.



"When in Need,"
said Bear,
"A hot cup of tea
and a good friend
can cure just
about anything
from the common
cold to heartache
and all points
in between"



Editorial Board :

Kiran GROVER

Brenda DENNIS

Joy Deep GHOSH

Sunday Morning Coming Down.....!

The long range of the Bhutan Hills which meets the Himalayas diagonally, protect an important segment of India's eastern frontier known as the Dooars Valley. This emerald green valley of tea plantations is in turn protected by herds of wild elephants who make it their business to keep law and order between man and beast.

On a winter Sunday morning in the early 1970's, George Gay, the manager of Central Dooars Tea Estate was in a pensive mood. He started up his yellow Land Rover at 5:30 am and was out of his bungalow driving through the sections of tea bushes which he had nurtured for decades with a loyal team of hardy up-country Gurkha and Madesia workers led by a handful of sporty Executives. Mr. Gay stared at the distant peaks of the dark blue mountains and noticed through the clearing mist, several spots where snow had fallen covering the hill tops like white vanilla ice cream. But today old George was not quite in the Sunday ice cream frame of mind. He was retiring from tea and in a few days would be leaving India for good. The only precious items he would carry back home would be his memories of the Second World War in which he fought as a young British officer in the Indian Army and, of course, his Kingdom in tea. The previous night he had signed off all the papers transferring the managerial powers of the Estate to Ashok Atal considered by the company to be an outstanding up-and-coming young planter.

While George Gay was coping with

his nostalgic feelings early in the morning in the crisp winter air, Ashok Atal, was snoring without a care in the upstairs bedroom of the Rangamati Division Bungalow where he was temporarily lodged. He was truly exhausted after his journey from Assam and all the packing and crating of his stuff. The handing/taking over formalities which were completed the previous evening between the two managers, had been no picnic either. Atal had to be super sensitive to George Gay's feelings at every turn. Both men were, above anything else, gentlemen to the core.

Exactly at 5:30 in the morning, the Earth shook! Ashok Atal woke up in mid-snore and had no idea where he was! Desperately gathering his faculties and tightening his pajama strings, he headed for the bathroom. The Earth shook again! Ashok was not the kind of man to wait for things to happen. He "made" things happen. He stopped for a moment and as the 19th century hardwood bungalow shook and shivered again, Atal knew that the wooden construction could not possibly stand a chance against an earthquake of such magnitude! He leaped over the bedroom furniture, simultaneously shouting a command to the night chowkidar, "Chowkidar! Bungalow chorke bhago". In a single breath, he had ordered the chowkidar to vacate the bungalow as he himself dashed towards the wooden staircase in the back, and scampered down the stairs before the bungalow could collapse around him in a heap. Sheer will power and momentum propelled this tall, elegant man down

the narrow, back staircase. On reaching the ground, he was due another shock. He found himself trapped between the hind legs of a massive elephant who was rubbing and scratching his backside against one of the weight-bearing pillars holding up the bungalow, thus causing the "earthquake"! It took Ashok a split second to make his assessment of the situation... after all he was an Assam Planter! Like a yo-yo on a string, he returned to the top of the staircase, he knew not how. The puzzled elephant sensing that something frivolous was happening behind his back walked away disdainfully to where he had come from.

In the meantime, chowkidar, Bhim Singh, had already mustered his wits and tactfully proceeded to serve his master a hot breakfast of fried eggs, fried chicken -liver with sauted tomatoes and toast.

The aroma of fried chicken calmed Ashok's nerves. He flipped the napkin dismissing the memory of the elephant and attended to his breakfast. It was just another Sunday morning in Rangamati.

Subir Ghosh, former *Jardines planter and Chief Executive*, has also worked for the *Meleod Russel group*.

An active sportsman in tea he had earlier represented Madhya Pradesh in the 1964 National Games of India, in the sprints. He is 80, now lives in Williamsburg, Virginia with his wife Indira (nee Razdan). Their grandson Soleman Ghosh holds the Virginia Military Institute record in Discuss throw event.



Speech by Mr. Dasgupta (Head clerk Chuapara Tea Estate) when Mr Amir Ahsan, formerly of Jardines and Mcleod Russel, was retiring.



“Shakespeare in the Tea Garden “

Farewell to the respected Mr. Amir Ahsan, a Marshall of modernism, a man of masculine personality, a harbinger of Agro-Industrial development and an angel of humanity and human relations

Oh - Our beloved and regarded deity of modern avocation and a divinely blessed stalwart, have you felt, all the rows and passages of the branbled bushes which you had transformed from mud to asphalt, thatched to matched, are weeping in sorrow.

The rattling of the factory modernised by you keeping pace with to-day's triumph of science is shooting out anguished cry.

The stony bricks of all the walls and plinths are pelting melancholy chants and notes in plaintive mood.

You have brought the nector of culture to this landscape blanketed with bushes of leaves and buds afar from the madding crowd and transformed the pit of monotony into a vast lagoon of rich culture and Sanskrit for the multitude.

The permanent hall and stages in the garden shall breed in the hearts of tomorrows runners valliant pulse to go ahead with the torch of enlightenment.

This garden once used to be presumed as exile, a dominion of dark vegetation, now reshaped as an eden of habitation.

You have brought the science of the day to this vast Green kingdom and replaced the yesterdays classic with your modern touch in production and administration.

By your grace the copturs of our H.O. Land on the Helipad upon the grassy carpet of the garden whence the commuters are brought to the entertaining Golf Green.

In your bidding adieu from us after your protracted stay among us as a Pilot we hear now a heart-grilling muse of tragic rythm sung by the plants and men ravine and revulets.

All these achievements have not been sweetly shapped by you alone, but you were put into active gear by your most accomplished life partner, Mrs. Ahsan who bestowed her ever pleasing richest Tagorian culture experience. Her erudition and skill, paragonal sweetness in vocal cadenza installed her great image in the heart of all the gardeners.

In this budding moment both of you are migrating away leaving behind rich legacy of art and culture, work and worth. We the followers of such a great exponent shall carry on the unfinished task which you tought us to do.

Though we have turbulent hope, again you will come back to us, yet no barrage can block our eyes deluged with profused tear at the moment of your transfer which is to us a bolt from the blue.

We console ourselves -----

Weep no more, Weep no more

They are not away from our

Inmost core.





The lady of leisure

Those familiar with Modern English Poetry may call to mind the opening lines in *A Game of Chess* in T.S. Eliot's famous poem, *The Wasteland*. The expensive, opulent furnishings and classic bric-a-brac gives an insight into the lavish lifestyle of the rich modern woman, sitting on an intricately designed chair which is more like a burnished throne. Despite her fabulous wealth and life of ease, her life is essentially hollow.

This, at a glance, would perhaps denote the life of unrealistic leisure and comfort of the tea garden *memsahib*, sitting in her splendid surroundings, drinking coffee and musing about nothing on earth, while liveried attendants appear at the press of a button like the genie in *Alauddin's Magic Lamp*, run around to do her every bidding. This should connote a life of endless void in a gilded cage existence where time stands still. But in actual fact, nothing could be farther from the truth. Most ladies in tea, made commendable use of their ample time and resources.

First, they honed in their culinary skills and learned as many skills as they could from their expert chefs or *baburchis*, as they were commonly called; a rare breed of Chittagong Buddhist cooks. The *baburchis* and bearers took great pride in their work. Besides churning out the usual home-made butter from cow's milk; marmalade and other jams and jellies were prepared from freshly picked fruits from the garden; while vegetables were pickled and stored in large glass jars. Some of the ladies also developed the knack of wine-making, a skill which they executed with great pride. Preparation of ham was another lengthy process which normally extended for weeks. Smoked **hilsa* was another delicacy the ladies

revealed in



learning from their *baburchis* who followed their own unique style. The *hilsa* fish would be baked in rough-hewn brick-laid ovens.

Most ladies took to gardening with a zeal and spent considerable part of the day supervising the work of the *malis*, picking up invaluable tips from their seasoned gardeners. Besides the ornamental front lawns with their array of rare and beautiful blossoms, they also maintained very useful kitchen gardens with almost any vegetable for the asking. And not to speak of the orchard gardens placed mostly at the back of the bungalow towards the rear of the rambling grounds.

Then of course, there was the poultry and the dairy to be looked into. Though the ladies never had to sully their hands, unless they chose to, in attending to these matters, they definitely had to keep track of what was going on where. Which cow was ill, which one had a new calf, which one was giving less milk and why—these were all issues that needed to be addressed and held the *memsahib's* undivided attention.

Some of the ladies also put their free time to good use by attaining proficiency in painting and fine arts. Their walls would be adorned with their own paintings, mostly oils on canvas, ranging from still-lives and flowers to impressive portraits and exquisite landscapes. Besides painting, many ladies also had a go at making varieties of handicrafts ranging from candle-making to showpieces and embroidery, knitting and crochet and babies' clothing.

Some of the tea ladies were also excellent sportswomen. Some were ace tennis players, some were formidable at golf while a few were champion swimmers. These athletic ladies would proudly display on their drawing room shelves, the cups and trophies they won at tennis and golf tournaments and swimming gala events at different planters' clubs.

Talking about Club Do's and sporting events, these were normally huge affairs rounded off with large servings of snacks, drinks and

cuisines. The ladies played a pivotal



role in organizing the eatables intricately arranged on spotless white table-cloth, working in close cooperation in arranging the food, cooked by their *baburchis*, for hundreds of people. They often had the bungalow bearers over to do the serving and arranging. Socializing and entertaining being so intrinsic to the tea social fabric, the ladies were adept at entertaining endless guests and organizing frequent parties at their bungalows.

One favorite pastime of some of the ladies was to collect pieces of interesting looking driftwood from the riversides and have them burnished or painted for elaborate, unique flower arrangements. Some converted chopped pieces of tree trunks into low stools with cushions and placed them before the fireplace, imparting a touch of the wilderness to their snug, stylish living rooms.

So, unlike the neurotic lady in Eliot's poem, the ladies in tea never asked themselves or others, what they should do to kill time - today, tomorrow or ever.



Oindrila Mukherjee was born in Assam and grew up in the tea plantations when the industry was going through major changes. She is the daughter of Ranjan Mukherjee (popularly known as Ranjan Da), one of the founding members of the esteemed PSEI. She majored in English Literature from Delhi University and did a Masters in Sociology. She began her career as a journalist and has published numerous articles in major Indian dailies like *The Telegraph* and *TOI*. She has also authored a book. Currently she lives with her daughter in Kolkata.



Thinking of the *Good Times...*







★ ★ ★
EASTERN STAR
 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
SPECIAL EDITION

Evening News

EASTMENT MIGRATES TO WEST
 SHOT IN THE ARM FOR BRITAIN – BEDSER

OLGA FELLIS

Mr. Roystan Arthur Eastment will be returning to England after spending 38 years in his chosen land Assam. Sir Alec Bedser has said that Mr. Eastment's return has been very timely, specially as Gatting is injured and Grower has yet to regain his form. An experienced campaigner like Roy—he said—will give the English side a shot in the arm desperately needed to overcome the hostile bowling.

A young correspondent questioned the wisdom of including Mr. Eastment in the team at the expense of younger and fitter players. Sir Alec retorted "Listen Kid, I bet Ten to One that you can not keep pace with" Roy Eastment. He is well oiled machine, The correspondent wanted to know the secret of his youth. Sir Alec replied that it is an age old recipe—if you remain pickled you remain young.

Colin Cowdrey has welcomed the idea of including Roy Eastment in the team. In his message he said "Roy is a team man and a natural ball player. His dedication, acumen and team spirit has taken the North Bank to the top of the league, he has been in the side since '48 and this speaks for his consistency." He said "Indiad's loss is Englan's gain"

Following are the excerpts of our correspondent's interview with Mr. Eastment.

- O F :- What is your secret ambition ?
- RAE :- Money
- O F :- What have you done to achieve it ?
- RAE :- Nothing so far, but I'll be going on a south Africa tour.
- O F :- Do you also Plan to go down-under ?
- RAE :- Not for pennies, may be for guineas.
- O F :- How come your thinking is so youthful ?
- RAE :- I frams the mental knots and generate fresh thinking. It rejuvenates you.
- O F :- Where did you learn this ?
- RAE :- It is an age old practice in tea. I suggest it to everyone.
- O F :- What is your secret desire ?
- RAE :- To invent a fool proof hair growing tonic.
- O F :- What is your special dish ?
- RAE :- A French cherry pie.
- O F :- Any message for the English Team touring West-Indies ?
- RAE :- Take a lawn mower along. I hear the girls still wear Grass skirts in some parts.

- O F :- What made you stay back in tea, specially with your talent ?
- RAE :- The answer is a poem. If you like you can publish it.

ROY'S EASTMENT

(By E. M. Ason.)

Promotion is the spice of life
 Some to achieve it use the knife,
 But some, as Machiavelli taught.
 Use craft and guile, and lots of thought.

Every time a V.A. goes
 A lunch I give to hide my woes,
 Although officially it's meant to be
 A party for the S.O.B.

I feed 'em booze and victuals too
 I buy their cars and do
 All that I should and more besides
 I butter up their every sides,

When V.A.'s come into my pad.
 I make them think I'm awfully glad,
 The best of food I always pass
 And spike their drinks with ground-up glass.

Voice of dissent I never raise,
 I shower everyone with praise,
 In every IOC I write
 I'm calm, I'm cool and always trite.
 I've chucked the booze, forsworn the fags,
 I don't touch girls or sexy mags,
 I've tried it all, I've been so staid,
 Always the bridesmaid, never laid.

With folded hands I pray each day
 Please God make me the next V.A.
 But my bot line to heaven must be
 Not functioning like the P. & T.

Ambition surely can't be sin
 Although at times it's hard to grin
 In spite of feeling awfully sad
 When offspring ask "Not V.A. Dad ?"

I've crept, I've crawled, I've groveled low,
 To no effect, it now seems so.
 My advice ? To quit dear E.M.
 And become, if not V.A. atleast G.M.

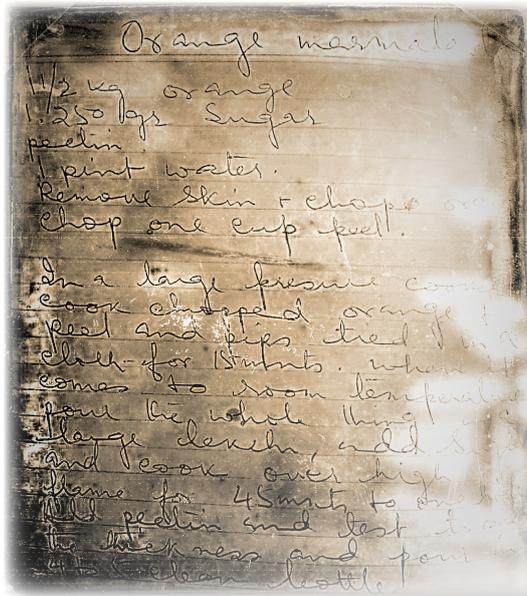


A page from a tea memsahibs "Cook book"!

These recipes are handwritten by Late Mrs Leela Nag wife of Late Mr Paresh Nag of Jardines. She was creative and innovative with a great sense of humour too. We're privileged to have received these recipes from her daughter Shona Patel.



Orange Marmalade



1.5 Kg Orange



1.250 Kg Sugar



Pectin



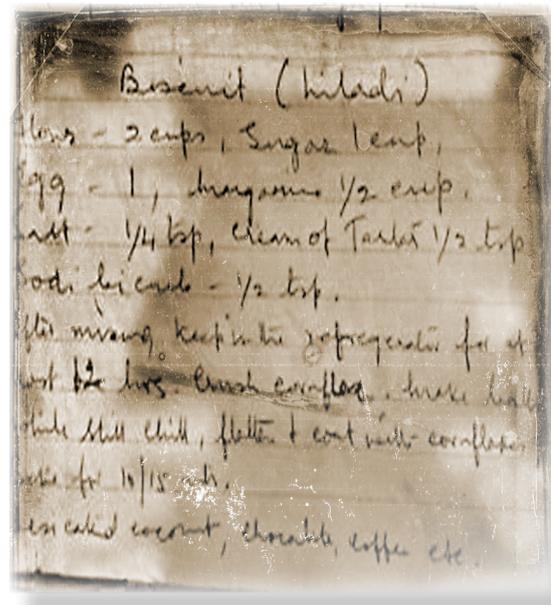
1 pint water

Remove skin and chop orange. Chop one cup orange peel.

In a large pressure cooker, cook chopped orange & peel and pips tied in a cloth for 15 minutes. When it comes to room temperature, pour the whole thing in a large dekchi (Utensil), add sugar and cook over high flame for 45 minutes to one hour. Add pectin and test to see the thickness and pour in 4 to 5 clean bottles.



Biscuit (Liladi)



Flour - 02 Cups, Sugar - 01 Cup



Egg - 01 No.



Margarine - 1/2 Cup



Salt - 1/4 tea spoon



Cream of tartar - 1/2 tea spoon



Soda bicarbonate - 1/2 tea spoon



Sieve dry ingredients together. Cream margarine and sugar. Then Add egg. Mix in dry ingredients. Refrigerate for 12 hours. Heat Oven at 350 degree. Make walnut size balls - flatten with palm of hand, press into coconut, cornflakes, chopped pecans etc.

Bake 12-15 minutes





CHATELAIN TG. - Early 1900. Sr. Manager's Bungalow



DAODEAHN BUNGALOW - 1920 - Chang Bungalow



BASHMATA TG. - Early 20th Century - Chang Bungalow



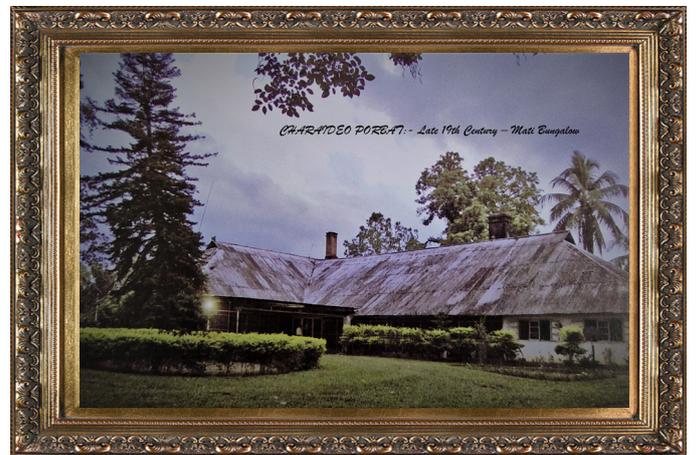
ARCACTYPORE TG. - 1880 - Thatched Bungalow



SOREAM TG. - Early 19th Century - Matt Bungalow



SYDHALAGAR TG. - Late 19th Century - Thatched Bungalow



CAHAYOSO PORBAT. - Late 19th Century - Matt Bungalow



OTILANARA TG. - 1906 - Movie "Chandni Memsaab" was filmed here.





The history of Tea

2737 B.C.

According to Chinese legend, tea was invented accidentally by the Chinese Emperor Shen Nong when leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant drifted into a heated open pot of water.

59 B.C.
Wang Bao wrote the first known book with instructions on buying and preparing tea.

22 C.E.
Panned physician and emperor Liu An wrote the *Shen Nong Cha*, in which he described tea as a medicinal herb.

400-600 C.E.
The demand for tea rose steadily, higher than honey, because it was a wild tree, farmers began to develop ways to cultivate tea.

479 C.E.
Turkish traders bartered for tea on the Silk Road, trading with silk, honey and horses.

589-618 C.E.
During the Su Dynasty, tea was introduced to Japan by Buddhist monks.

618-906 C.E.
During the Tang Dynasty, Chinese scholars on the Silk Road, trading with silk, honey and horses.

780 C.E.

Peet Li Yu wrote the first book of tea, making tea a drink, and the book described how to cultivate and prepare tea.

1200-1500

1206-1368
Marco Polo visited Sumatra, he brought an orchard-like culture regarding tea to Europe and introduced it to China. Marco Polo was not even introduced to tea when he visited.

1211
In Japan, Hoju wrote a small book on tea, spreading its popularity further.

1368-1644
During the Ming Dynasty, Chinese people began to enjoy tea as a beverage. The new method of preparation was called gongxi, which means "hot water for tea".

1422-1502
The Japanese tea ceremony was created by the priest and scholar Sen no Rikyu, who had learned the tea to the tea ceremony called Cha No Yu, which means "hot water for tea".

1600

1610
The Dutch brought tea to Europe from China, trading dried sage in exchange.

1636
Tea became known in France.

1657
Tea was first sold in England at Coventry Coffee Houses in London.

1661
The Taiwanese began to drink wild tea.

1662
China's first Catherine Empress of Portugal as tea wife. The both drank tea, wearing it, holding it, and about beverages to last from hour.

1669
Close to 150 pounds of tea were shipped to England.

1689
Traders with three hundred camels traveled 11,000 miles to China and back in order to supply British demand. The trip took seven months.

1679
A Welsh settler of former's health, cured himself the first domestic, because there were few tea in the world, known export of Taiwanese tea.

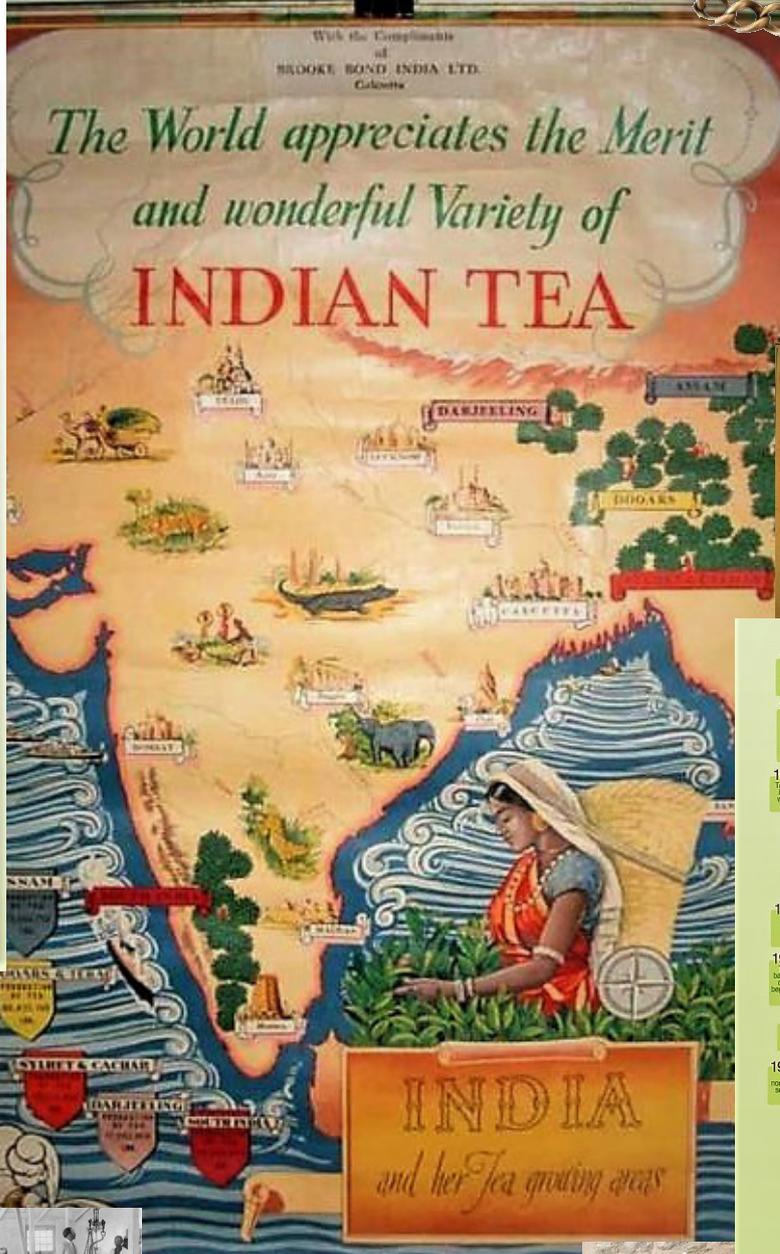
1700

1705
The yearly importation of tea to England grew to approximately 800,000 pounds.

1710
Wealthy American Colonists developed a taste for tea.

1733
The British Tea Party, protesting high taxes on tea, led to the Boston Tea Party. The American colonists began to import tea from the East India Company, which had a monopoly on tea trade in the Americas. The company's tea was sold at a high price, and the colonists began to drink tea from the East India Company.

1776
England sent the first consignment of tea to the United States. The tea was sold at a high price, and the colonists began to drink tea from the East India Company.



INDIAN TEA relieves lassitude

1800

1834
An Imperial Edict from the Chinese Emperor closed all Chinese ports to foreign trade until the end of the First Opium War.

1835
The East India Company established experimental tea plantations in Assam, India.

1840's
These ports still in China, and up to the time of the First Opium War, tea was the only commodity that China was willing to trade with the West.

1856
Tea was planted in many areas of Darjeeling.

1857
Tea plantations were started in China during the First Opium War, but would not be exported until the 1870's.

1869
A deadly fungus wiped out the coffee crop in China, and preference from coffee to tea.

1869
The Suez Canal opened, making the trip to China easier and more economical by sea.

1870
Tastings of English began to brand tea for consistency.

1900-2000

1900
The Chinese government made transport to Burma Cheong and other tea regions an important production as well.

1904
Richard Schuyler introduced tea to the St Louis World Fair.

1908
Thomas Sargent invented tea bags in New York, sending tea to clients in silk bags which they began to mistakenly steep without opening.

1910
Sumatra, Indonesia grows and exports tea. Soon thereafter, tea is grown in Kenya and other parts of Africa.

1953
World's first instant tea is introduced.

1970
The Taiwanese government encouraged its population to drink tea, introducing tea culture on the island.

1987
An Indian multinational non-alcoholic beverage company set up a fully owned subsidiary, Tata Tea, in the USA.

1993-2008
The American specialty tea market has experienced over being worth \$6.8 billion a year.

2012

Tea is grown and produced in more than 40 countries worldwide, every year, more than 2.5 million tons of tea is produced around the world.

Sources:

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