

# Tea Education

December 2012

## TEA PROCESSING

All teas start with plucking fresh leaves. The young leaves of the tea bush are hand-plucked to select only the finest quality leaf-grade teas.

With a few exceptions all Peet's teas are "fine-plucked". Fine plucking is the practice of taking only the top two leaves and a bud from each shoot. The finest potential flavors and aromas are concentrated in this youngest growth; making fine-plucking, one of the first steps in selecting the best quality teas for Peet's.

Coarse plucking uses the coarser more mature leaves, lower down on the shoot, which cannot deliver as fine or complex a quality due to their having more cellulose and woody structure and therefore less of the components that develop aroma and flavor during processing.

Since all tea comes from the same plant (*camellia sinensis*), it's the different processing that results in a wide range of flavors in the cup and provides us with the five categories of tea: white, green, oolong, black and pu-erh. The different processing steps for tea are listed below. Not all teas go through all of the steps. The following pages list the exact steps for each tea category.



### Overview of Tea Processing Steps

- *Picking/Plucking* – all tea starts with picking the leaf
- *Withering* – initial drying of bruised or torn leaf to break down leaf to liberate juices
- *Fixation* – heating to prevent or halt oxidation
- *Rolling* – leaves formed to shape of desired tea
- *Oxidation* – also called fermentation, leaf enzymatically broken down
- *Drying* – done by many ways (sun, pan-fired, baked, air drying) to finish the leaves
- *Curing* – secondary oxidation /fermentation
- *Grading* – improve appearance, consistency of leaf size and taste

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## BLACK TEA PROCESSING STEPS

1. Picking
2. Withering
3. Rolling
4. Oxidation
5. Drying
6. Grading

**Sourcing Origins:** India, China and Sri Lanka



Rolling machines used in the production of black tea

## GREEN TEA PROCESSING STEPS

1. Picking
2. De-enzyming
3. Rolling
4. Drying
5. Grading

**Sourcing Origins:** China and Japan



The leaves of green tea are pan-fired to complete the drying processes. Lung Ching Dragonwell is an example of a pan-fired tea.

## WHITE TEA PROCESSING STEPS

1. Picking
2. Withering
3. Drying
4. Grading

**Sourcing Origin:** China



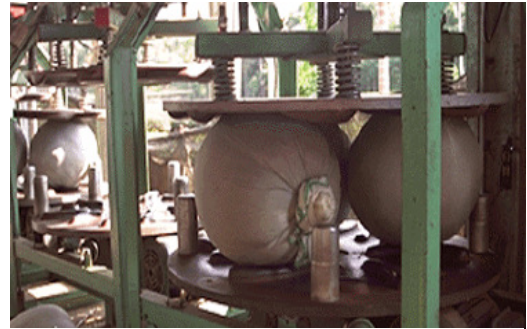
White tea is spread thin on bamboo racks indoors for drying. The wind movement adjusted by shutters on the exterior walls to control the process.

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## OOLONG TEA PROCESSING STEPS

1. Picking
2. Withered
3. Rolling
4. Oxidation
5. Drying
6. Grading

**Sourcing Origins:** China and Taiwan



Some oolong teas are placed into large sacks and slowly rolled by machines



Workers hand-sorting the leaves for the grading of Phoenix Mountain oolong

## PU-ERH TEA PROCESSING STEPS

1. Picking
2. Withered
3. De-enzymed
4. Rolled
5. Oxidation
6. Dried
7. Fermented
8. Graded
9. Re-steamed
10. Re-dried
11. Aged

**Sourcing Origin:** China



Drying stage of Pu-erh Tea