



# Hot Tea

Tea is bubbling up everywhere you look in the North. But then again, it always has. Put on the kettle.

If it's winter, it's teatime.

**W**here there are cold gray days and flavorful leaves to steep, there is good reason for tea. And so it is that tea drinking, whether for social or medicinal purposes, or simply to warm up, has simmered through the history of the Northwoods. Long before 1690, when the *Camellia sinensis* leaf, or tea leaf, was publicly sold for the first time in America, Native Americans of the Great Lakes region brewed up herbal teas to cure their ailments. They simmered mint leaves to soothe upset stomachs, steeped bergamot when their throats were sore and drank a spot of brewed borage leaves to cure a cough. The Ojibwe even soaked their fishing nets in a spicy tea of sassafras and sweet flag to attract a better catch.

But did they politely serve a steaming cup for an afternoon pick-me-up? Probably not. The Brits at Fort Michilimackinac, on the other hand, couldn't resist the pomp. John Askin, a prominent British trader at the Straits of Mackinac during the Revolutionary War listed as his household inventory a red-ware teapot; black Bohea and green Hyson teas from China, teaspoons and tongs, also from China; and a Japanese tea board. Not that it was always easy to make teatime happen, what with a war on and the logistics of getting the leafy gold from China to the Straits of Mackinac. In 1778 Askin wrote to an associate in Detroit: "Mrs. Askin has still some tea and loaf sugar and once a day for herself will be able to hold out." The rest of the household had to make due with other beverages. (*History from the Hearth: A Colonial Michilimackinac Cookbook* by Sally Eustice)

#### CAPTION HEAD

LEFT: Caption Matrimonii conubium santet apparatus bellis, quamquam plane parsimonia syrtes fermentet saburre. RIGHT: Tiam tremulus umbraculi deciperet fiducias. Pessimus adlaud

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Marilla Historical Museum

### Marilla Historical Museum

Inside the rustic log-and-mortar home that's part of the Marilla Historical Museum, hostesses Jan Thomas and Mary Brooks serve tea the way it should be served: inside delicate antique china, by the warm glow of an oil lamp and with plenty of good conversation. Two pots of tea, a homemade dessert—sugarplum cobbler with cream is a favorite—and a dainty plate of fruit and cheese convey the simple sweetness of pioneer tea time. While you sip, Jan shares local historical stories and songs. Jan and Mary also lead visitors on a tour of the home, as well as though the replica of a trapper's cabin, an early 1900's barn and the former Marilla schoolhouse. ADMISSION IS BY DONATION. CALL JAN THOMAS, 231-362-3430.

### The Wellington Inn Bed & Breakfast

When brides and expecting mothers send out tea party invitations with the note "hats and gloves optional," Barbara Rishel, owner of the Wellington Inn Bed & Breakfast, knows she'll see the hats. You'll feel, well, a little too rustic wearing anything less in the parlor of her 100-year-old neoclassical mansion in downtown Traverse City. Sit at one of six tables and sip Earl Grey from your antique tea cup, and dine on three delectable courses of finger sandwiches, scones and petitfores. The scones are a blend of the best recipes gathered from the Ritz to the QE2. Rishel's a quest for excellence is also evident in the meticulous restoration of the 13,000-square-foot mansion. CALL AHEAD FOR RESERVATIONS, 231-922-9900. \$17.50 PER PERSON.



MARILLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM BY BRIAN CONFER.

# afternoon delights

Enjoy a memorable tea time at one of these Northern Michigan tables.



### Grand Hotel

The moment you sit down for Afternoon Tea in the Grand Hotel's bright green parlor or on the 660-foot porch, a waiter takes your order. Within minutes he presents you with English Morning tea and two full plates: one of savory finger foods, such as lox or pâté on toasted baguettes; the other filled with treats like chocolate-covered strawberries, cannoli, almond tarts and scones. While you enjoy the

food, the soothing notes of *Swan Lake* drift in and out of your conversation, courtesy of the harpist playing in the background. But don't let the formal ambience intimidate you—attire is resort casual and relaxation is key. SERVED FROM 3:30 P.M. TO 5 P.M., TEA IS \$25 FOR HOTEL GUESTS AND \$35 FOR NON-GUESTS. CALL 800-33-GRAND.

### Horton Bay General Store

Tea at Horton Bay is unpretentious but luxurious. In 2002, Claudia and Chip Lorenger bought the 130-year old General Store, intent on restoring the crumbling building to "what it should be." Today, find a warm local gathering spot with such touches as white tablecloths, wicker chairs and a wood-burning stove. Choose from six different teas to drink with your warm homemade scone, choice of sandwich, fruit tart and glass of cherry port from Shady Lane Cellars. As a proper parting gift, the hostess sends you home with a small pouch of your favorite tea. \$18 PER PERSON. CALL AHEAD FOR RESERVATIONS, 231-582-7827.



## BY THE LIGHT OF DAY

**It wasn't until** she began growing her own herbs that Leelanau County's Angela Macke began looking at bagged tea with skepticism. "It was like fish food," Macke says, but it gave her an idea. She would start a tea company, selling her own tisanes—herbal teas—made from herbs, fruits and flowers, and offering 100-percent fair trade, 100-percent organic loose leaf tea. She quit her nursing job, and her company, By the Light of Day, was born.

Macke gets her tea leaves directly from premium fair trade and organic farms in China, India, South Africa, and Ceylon, ensuring fair pay for the farmers. The majority of the fruit for her blends comes from organic Leelanau farmers. As for the flowers and herbs, she grows them all in her garden.

The result is tea like you've never tasted before. Some to try? Macke's Leelanau Licorice, which slips in a hint of peppermint with supremely sweet staying power. Or Creamy Earl Grey—it more than does its name justice. Those looking for a little flair to go with the flavor will love Macke's hand-tied jasmine balls. When steeped in boiling water, each one opens like a flower inside your teacup.

You can find several of Macke's teas at such places as 'Nother Cuppa Joe, Building 50 at the Grand Traverse Commons

(231-947-7730) and Hanna Bistro and Bar (231-946-8207), both in Traverse City. Macke herself will be at Silver Tree Deli in Suttons Bay for a tea event on January 28 at 1 p.m. Fresh-from-the-kitchen tea sandwiches, pastries and snacks will be served alongside Macke's teas. FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 231-271-2271

### Take-Home Tea

Headlining the bulk product section at Oryana Natural Foods Market, a co-op in downtown Traverse City, are eight shelves lined with 60 glass jars—each one filled to the brim with organic loose leaf teas.

Organic growing practices are important for tea because a tea's subtle flavors and compounds are easily affected by tampering, says Brian Bowman, Oryana's man in charge of ordering, tasting and approving each tea that comes in. When it comes to such a delicate drink, Bowman says, "You don't want to taste anything but the tea."

Price and quality of tea, like wine, is subjective. There are plenty of teas that cost \$100 per pound, but Brian keeps Oryana's prices between \$22 and \$40 per pound. Considering a pound will pour you more than 200 servings and tea keeps for 3 to 5 years, you'll have plenty of time to sit back and get your money's worth.

Of the six tea companies Bowman buys from, two are local—Anahata and By the Light of Day (see sidebar, above)—and the other four are fair trade firms from the United States and Canada. CALL ORYANA AT 231-947-0191.

#### CAPTION HEAD

**ABOVE:** Angela Macke.  
**RIGHT:** The loose tea selection Oryana Natural Food Market.



By the Victorian Era (1837–1901), tea cafes, tea gardens and tea dances had become part of the North's resort social setting. In the late 1880's the Grand Hotel treated its guests to afternoon tea in the same parlor it does today. Plates of delicate crackers and pâtés provided an afternoon snack to prevent what Anna, Duchess of Bedford, had called some 50 years before in England, "that sinking feeling"—the discomfort that inevitably arose while waiting for a late dinner at eight or nine in the evening.

The withering duchess is credited with the very concept of afternoon tea. The custom differed from tea sipped in the drawing room after dinner by the upper classes, or tea taken with a light supper by the lower classes. The new afternoon tea was served on low coffee tables, hence, it became known as low tea. High tea, served on high tables, was the meal for the rowdy masses. In America, that distinction has been lost to history. Today, we refer to high tea as that lofty thing where you put on your Sunday clothes and use the china cups—saucers, too.

We might have muddled our highs and lows, but Americans are becoming schooled in the many health benefits of tea. Among them? Tea has fluoride—that compound that helps prevent tooth decay. And tea contains powerful antioxidants—those wonder substances that keep cells healthy and are thought to mitigate aging, cancer and heart disease. Tea may not be a panacea, but Anne Hughes, a family nurse practitioner and tea enthusiast, for one, believes tea drinking is such a good habit that she promotes it in her Traverse City holistic health care practice, The Nurse's Office (231-645-0911). "I think that the whole preparing and consuming of tea is a metaphor for the path to health," Hughes says.

For the health of it, as an excuse for a get-together, or just to kill the chill, tea is hotter than

"Lichihlai, a Sung poet, has sadly remarked that there were three most deplorable things in the world: the spoiling of fine youths through false education, the degradation of fine paintings through vulgar admiration, and the utter waste of fine tea through incompetent manipulation."  
—OKAKURA KAKUZA, *THE BOOK OF TEA*

## Brew the Perfect Pot

**1** Here's how to brew correctly: Start with fresh, clean, cold and odorless water—good water sets the tone for good tea. Never make tea with reheated water—its oxygen has been depleted and this will dull the tea's flavor. Pour the water into a clean kettle and bring it to a boil. In the meantime, fill your teapot with hot water to warm it.

**2** While the water in the kettle is heating up, measure out your loose tea. Two grams of tea (about one rounded teaspoon) to every 6 ounces of water (a teacup's worth) will make a consistently good cup. If you're making a pot, a good rule of thumb is one teaspoon for every guest and one for the pot. The same rule works for tea bags, too

**3** Place the leaves directly into your pot or use an infuser for an easy cleanup. The best infusers let leaves expand, such as a basket infuser. If you have a metal ball infuser, make sure the leaves aren't packed in too tightly. Or watch the beautiful leaves unfurl—called the "agony of the leaves"—in a French press (one preferably reserved for tea).

**4** The ancient Chinese were so tuned into tea that they categorized boiling water three ways: crab-eye, fish-eye and old man. Crab-eye is when tiny ribbons of bubbles fill the water; fish-eye is when bubbles are the size of fish eyes on the bottom of the pan, just beginning to rise; old man means the water is at a rolling, churning boil. In general, green and white teas are best steeped when the water is around the crab-eye and fish-eye stages and black and oolong teas at the fish-eye.

**5** Steep white tea for at least a minute but for as long as 6 minutes; green tea for at least a minute but not longer than 4 minutes; Oolong is best steeped at between 2 and 3 minutes; Steep black tea for 3 to 5 minutes—but no longer because it will get bitter. But give yourself permission to experiment—even tea connoisseurs play around with the technique. Steep long, steep short, add honey. It's your cup of tea.

**6** You can reuse your tea leaves as many as two times before they lose their flavor—some of the best tasting tea comes from the second or third infusion. Just set your infuser aside when you've had a cup, and you can use it again as late as the next day.