

| by Charlene Phillips

# iced tea

## a summertime tradition

As we celebrate the beautiful sun-filled days of summer, thoughts of slowing down with good friends and enjoying tall glasses of iced tea come to mind. Drinking iced tea is a uniquely American tradition with roots dating back to the summer of 1904. In fact, over 80% of the tea consumed in the USA is "iced tea," unlike most other countries that prefer the tradition of "hot tea." And next to water, tea is the most consumed beverage in the world!

June is National Iced Tea month. To celebrate this "cool" American tradition we visit the story of its birth. Oddly enough, the story begins with an Englishman named Richard Blechynden, a tea commissioner from Calcutta. At the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, Mr. Blechynden came to America to represent India and its tea. While attempting to serve boiling hot tea to uncomfortably hot fairgoers, Mr. Blechynden had an idea. He decided to quickly invent a way to "ice" his tea by pouring it through iced lead pipes. The result was the amazing fresh beverage we know as "iced" tea. It proved to be just what the thirsty fairgoers needed, and further enhanced India's role as a major tea grower and exporter.

Today, India is the top-producing tea country in the world, although Sri Lanka is the largest exporter of tea. Over 227,000 tons of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) tea is exported each year. This represents 19% of the global demand for tea! Imagine Sri Lanka with its sprawling mountain-side tea gardens. Each morning, tea plantation workers dressed in colorful saris pluck tealeaves while carrying large baskets on their backs. Paid by the number of baskets they collect, the workers move at an astounding rate, plucking two leaves and a bud from each bush in a methodical and rhythmic fashion. And, despite the tragic loss of life due to the massive tsunami affecting the Sri Lankan borders, the tea gardens were not affected due to their high altitude.

Ceylon tea is exceptionally pure and is said to be the "cleanest" tea in the world. Due to optimal growing conditions, very little residue from pesticides is found on the tealeaves. The fresh clean flavor and high antioxidant properties of fresh brewed loose Ceylon tea can't be matched by commercial instant or bottled tea. The light astringent quality and rich golden color and flavor makes it distinctively unique and refreshing.

Celebrate National Iced Tea month by having a cold glass of Ceylon tea. Look for Ceylon on the label, although not all commercial teas note their country of origin. Most importantly, enjoy the moment and feel good about doing something that is both relaxing and good for your health!



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR Charlene Phillips is the founder of the Rochester company Tealightful Treasures, a national business focused on teas and allied products. She can be contacted at the company's website, [www.tealightfultreasures.com](http://www.tealightfultreasures.com).



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