

The use and culture of tea in Korea.

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Summary

The modern tea industry in Korea began only 25 years ago. The location of Korean tea plantations is restricted to the southern area of the peninsula, including three major regions-Kyoungnam, Chonnam, and Cheju Island- because of the climatic condition.

Tea species cultivated in Korea are predominantly *Yabukita* cultivar and wild varieties. In Korea, there are two methods in use for manufacturing green tea. One is the traditional method using wild varieties, which is mostly processed by hand. The other is the modern method using *Yabukita* cultivar, which is mostly processed by machine.

Nearly 77% of all tea sales in Korea comes from the sale of tea-bags, rather than from loose tea. Canned tea drinking also has increased rapidly.

Tea culture has been a custom in Korean society since the ancient Dynastic periods. During the Chosun Dynasty, tea life and tea ceremony decreased considerably. It was largely through the continued use of tea by buddhist monks living in temples, literary men, and scholars that tea culture has survived.

Today, tea culture in Korea is being revived. Modern interest in learning the manners of tea drinking, has led to the revival of the tea ceremony and the spirit of tea drinking.

Key words: wild varieties, traditional method, tea-bags, buddhist monks

INTRODUCTION

It is said that tea seeds were first introduced into Shilla Dynasty from Tang Dynasty (china) about 1200 years ago. Historic documents suggest Korean people enjoyed drinking tea even before then. During the Koryo Dynasty (918-1392), Buddhism spread rapidly to all parts of the country and tea culture reached its peak. But when it comes to Chosun Dynasty, due to Confucian tradition, the ceremonial drinking of tea vanished almost completely, on whole, and Korean lost the old way of tea culture, though the monks in temples has been continued tea life. Tea plant also had been cultivated near temples or had grown naturally. It was until 1969 that the opening of large scale tea plantation was initiated as a way of special agricultural business of government. Since the late 1970s, various tea Lover's unions has been formed. Large industrial tea plantation and the mass production system introduced in modern tea industry by pacific corporation in the 1980s.

1. Current state of Korean tea plantation and production.

Tea is a subtropical plant flourish at the region with the higher than 15°C of yearly mean temperature and the more than 1,500 mm of annual rainfall.

Korean tea plantation area is restricted to the southern area including three major part. Kyoungnam, Chonnam, and Cheju island because of the climatic condition (Table 1).

Table 1. Korean tea plantation area and its condition

Division		Required Condition
Condition	Mean annual temperature	More than 14~16°C
	Annual amount of rainfall	More than 1,500mm
	Soil	pH 4.5~5.0, EC : below 1 Organic content : more than 2%
Region	Chonnam	Bosung Kangjin
	Kyoungnam	Hadong Hwakyee
	Cheju island	Seogwipo

Some production date of Koreaa tea are shown in Table 2.

Although tea production has remarkably increased for recent 20 years,

Table 2. Annual tea production in Korea

Year	Tea planting area (ha)	Green leaves (ton)	Yield per 10a (kg)
1980	540	105	19.4
1985	449	476	106.0
1990	448	1,480	330.4
1992	597	3,325	557.0
1994	642	3,645	567.7
1996	829	3,156	380.7
1998	1,128	5,000	443.3
2000	1,400	6,500†	464.3

† Assumed data

Tea species cultivated in Korea are predominantly Yabukita cultivar and wild varieties. Because of the lack of plant breeding or introducing the new varieties, Yabukita has been cultivated in the most of the Korean tea garden (Table 3). So optimal cutting stage and labor are concentrated in the same season.

In Korea, tea is grown mostly in mountainous area. About 60% of the cultivation area in small scale and located on steep hills.

Table 3. Cultivar and planting areas.

Planting	Cultivar	Configuration
Bo-sung	wild species	steep hill
Kang-jin, Hae-nam	Yabukita	flat land
Kwang-ju	Yabukita, wild species	flat land
Kwang-yang, Ku-rae	wild species	steep hill
Ha-dong	wild species	steep hill
Cheju-do	Yabukita	flat land

2. Tea consumption in Korea.

Tea consumption in Korea has increased from 0.5g in 1980 to 25g in annual individual consumption in 1999 (Table 4), which is supported by the increase of income and enhancement of their concerns for health. And this trend is expected to be continued.

Table 4. Tea consumption in Korea

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Consumption Per capita(g)	0.1	1.5	8.7	15.0	18.0	20.0	22.0	25.0	35.0

The size of Korean tea market is estimated to be about 930 billions won, and loose tea market occupies only 23% of total market (Table 5).

Table 5. The tea type selling in Korea (1999)

Type of tea	Market volume (millions won)	Ratio (%)
Loose tea	21,000	23
Tea-bag	72,000	77
Total	93,000	100

3. Tea and tea-things

kind of tea in Korea can be mainly classified by the season of picking. Green tea which made of being not fermented tea leaves is almost all. The making and drinking method of rice-cake type tea seems to be used by the ancient Korean people. Development of tea-things is closely related with change of social condition. Tea-things of Koryo celadon turned into white porelain in the Chosun Dynasty period, now, Korean mainly use white porelain as tea-things.

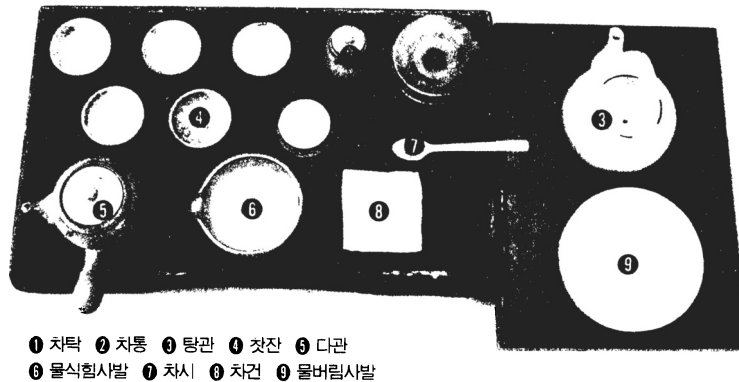


Fig.1. Tea – things of Korea

1. Saucer 2. Tea case 3. Kettle
3. Tea cup 5. Tea kettle 6. Cooling bowl
7. Tea spoon 8. Tea towel 9. Waste bowl

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