

## Shmanners 323: Tea

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[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

**Teresa:** And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

**Travis:** And you're listening to *Shmanners*!

**Teresa:** It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** How are you?

**Teresa:** I'm alright. Do you ever just open your mouth and hope the right thing comes out? [laughs]

**Travis:** Babe? That's my whole career. That's all I do.

**Teresa:** That was that intro for me. For a split second I was like, "Do I actually remember what I'm supposed to say?" But it was there.

**Travis:** That's usually— man. When you can hit an autopilot, it feels good.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh, it feels nice.

**Teresa:** How many episodes in?

**Travis:** Uh, 786 I think, of *Shmanners*.

**Teresa:** So that's a pretty poor track record. [laughs]

**Travis:** That's fair. We finally hit the pocket. Now we're in the comfort zone.

**Teresa:** There it is.

**Travis:** I have hit a point— it's allergies for me.

**Teresa:** Mmm.

**Travis:** Apparently ragweed is real high, I'm told. I don't know.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** And it has really messed with... me. And this is actually great, because the number one thing I've been feeling lately: itchy throat.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** And you know what I really like that helps with itchy throat?

**Teresa:** Tea.

**Travis:** Some hot tea.

**Teresa:** [British accent] Cuppa tea.

**Travis:** Sure. So, tell me. Spill the tea. Gimme that hot goss... about tea.

**Teresa:** [laughs] That hot leaf water.

**Travis:** That hot leaf water goss.

**Teresa:** Um, so we're gonna do a little bit more of a general tea episode this time. We've covered some specific tea ceremonies in the past, but we're gonna— we're gonna, you know, do a little refresher course.

**Travis:** Ahh, refreshing.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Indeed. And here's some great general facts I wanted to start off with. According to *National Geographic*, tea is one of the most widely consumed beverages in the world.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Hashtag duh, right?

[pause]

**Travis:** I don't know.

**Teresa:** Do people say that? I don't know.

**Travis:** Can I tell you what's so funny?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** In this week's *My Brother, My Brother, and Me* I had a whole running joke in the ad section of doing hashtag something, hashtag something, and making Griffin so mad.

**Teresa:** Oh!

**Travis:** And him being like, "No one does that. No one does that. No one does that." And then here's my wife... and you did it.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And it makes me happy.

**Teresa:** So we are both incredibly out of touch.

**Travis:** Or! Or we're super in touch, and Griffin doesn't know what he's talking about.

**Teresa:** I highly doubt that.

**Travis:** Griffin doesn't do— he's not online! Griffin doesn't do Twitter! He doesn't know what he's talking about! Griffin— I don't think Griffin does TikTok. I'm just saying, this is... I'm throwing down a little bit of the gauntlet, of who do you think is more in touch with what people talk about on social media, me or Griffin?

**Teresa:** We did say we were gonna spill some tea.

**Travis:** I'm just saying.

**Teresa:** Uh, in fact it's the most popular beverage on the planet, second only to water. And, you know, I'm one of those people. Water is one of the main ingredients, right? It counts as water, right?

**Travis:** No. Incorrect. Water is one of the main ingredients in... just about every drink. I think except, like, milk. But even then, cows need the water to drink. Like, beer is mostly water. Coffee is mostly water. Tea is mostly water.

**Teresa:** Yes. Yes it is. Yes it is, so I get my eight cups a day.

**Travis:** No!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** That's not how— 'cause when you— that's like saying "I added poison to water so it's perfectly fine to drink."

If you add tea to water, it changes it!

**Teresa:** [wheezes] Okay.

**Travis:** Because it makes it caffeinated. It makes it a diuretic. It makes it a lot of things.

**Teresa:** This is not a fight I'm willing to have on air.

**Travis:** 'Cause you're wrong?

**Teresa:** So the world—

**Travis:** Babe, is it 'cause you're wrong?

**Teresa:** —supposedly goes through about 3 million tons of tea every single year, most of which is enjoyed—

**Travis:** I really was afraid you were gonna say a day, and I was gonna be like, "Oh no."

**Teresa:** "Oh no." Uh, China, Ireland, UK, and Turkey are the top tea drinkers.

**Travis:** I'm actually not surprised by any of those.

**Teresa:** Because according to *The Atlantic*, the average Turkish citizen consumes nearly seven pounds of tea a year. That's a lot!

**Travis:** That is a lot.

**Teresa:** I definitely don't consume that much.

**Travis:** I've lost all perspective, though. I mean, I guess if somebody sat down a seven-pound bag of tea in front of me and said, "Do you want to consume this much tea?"

I'd be like, "Right now?"

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Um, so it feels like a lot I guess, yeah.

**Teresa:** I mean, I usually do tea— we do loose leaf tea around here most of the time.

**Travis:** Yeah, we're pretty, uh, hoity-toity.

**Teresa:** And that stuff doesn't weight hardly anything, so I can barely imagine what seven pounds of nothing weighs.

**Travis:** That's deep, babe. That's deep.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** What does— what does a pound of nothing weigh?

**Teresa:** I mean... it weighs something, because there's tea in there. But anyway, if the United States was a little far down on the list of tea-obsessed countries, we still— we still love our hot leaf water.

**Travis:** Well, not that much, 'cause we threw a bunch of it into the water—

**Teresa:** [laughs sarcastically]

**Travis:** No, I'm— listen, all joking aside... I think that for a long, long, long time, right? It was seen as, like, too British. And I think that it— I mean, we've referenced this show a lot. But in, uh— in *Supersizers Go*, I think it's World War II, there's a whole segment where they talk about, like, when you have the Joes over, the Americans over—

**Teresa:** Yeah, tea versus coffee, it's true.

**Travis:** Right.

**Teresa:** Um, in 2018 the United States drank 3.8 billion gallons of tea, most of which was ready to drink, because I'm lazy. So I like to buy tea in bottles, like sweet tea and, uh, Arizona Iced Tea, and...

**Travis:** But I think that's— I will say, I think... hmm. Now, this is where I might, like, draw a line and find a hill, and at least get hurt on it.

**Teresa:** Okay. [laughs]

**Travis:** I'm gonna get hurt on this hill. Um, I would say that when I think of tea, and we're talking about, like, tea consumption... to me I think iced tea and, like— and, like, a steeped tea, like hot tea, I think of 'em as two different drinks.

**Teresa:** Well, they're from the safe leaf, so.

**Travis:** I— listen, I know that this is true!

**Teresa:** They're the same.

**Travis:** But I don't think of iced coffee as coffee as two different drinks. I just think of it as, like, either it's this or it's cold. I think of iced tea... it doesn't feel— like, if you—

**Teresa:** That sounds like a personal problem to me. That's not, like—

**Travis:** I don't why you're bringing this energy to it.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I'm saying that ic-ed tea feels very Southern American to me, and hot tea feels very European to me. And they just feel like two different things. It feels like, uh, Americans went "Yeah, we'll do tea. If it's cold. Yeah, we win! Yeah!"

That's just how I feel.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** That's my thing.

**Teresa:** So, tea was being drunk in China as early as 2700 BCE, and probably as a medicinal beverage. Um, but by the third century, the plant was more widely cultivated, and people began to drink tea as a beverage.

**Travis:** I will say, just as far as creation goes, beginning goes, tea makes more sense to me that it became a drink than coffee does. Where tea was like, "Yeah, take this leaf. Soak it in hot water." Right? As opposed to coffee where it's like, "Well, we're gonna take these beans. What's that? Oh yeah, you gotta dig 'em up and stuff. And then we're gonna roast 'em— not burn 'em—"

**Teresa:** You don't— you don't dig up coffee beans.

**Travis:** Where do they come from?

**Teresa:** They come from coffee pods. It's a cacao—

**Travis:** Well, we're gonna take these and we're gonna roast 'em a little bit, and then grind 'em up real small— and there are just so many more steps is what I mean.

**Teresa:** Actually, no.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** There's a lot of steps for making tea leaves into tea. Uh, we'll go over that in a minute. But first of all, tea... wasn't often drunk. Mostly it was eat.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** As a, uh— served as a vegetable.

**Travis:** What?

**Teresa:** Or cooked down into a grain-like porridge.

**Travis:** What? Huh?

**Teresa:** Yeah. So you would take the tea leaves, kind of mash 'em up, right? And before people realized about 1500 years ago that, like, the combination of heat and moisture makes the tea leaves kind of a multifaceted experience. Before that they were just kind of chewing on 'em. Right?

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and the legend is that tea was brewed by accident. I don't know how...

**Travis:** Everybody loves to make it that.

**Teresa:** Everybody loves these things, don't they?

**Travis:** Everybody loves, like, "And then they— you know, the customer complained and said they did this and this, and they were like, 'I love it!'"

I was like, why can't it ever just be someone be like, "You know what I think would be a good idea?"

**Teresa:** I think that a lot of things are not made by accident. Not everything is a penicillin, right? Where, like, we just left this to grow for a week while we went on vacation.

Anyway—



**Travis:** But we keep trying. I let things grow for a week while I go on va— and then I come home and I eat it and I'm like, "Nope. That's still not penicillin."

**Teresa:** Not penicillin. Uh, Shennong, the father of Chinese agriculture, was said to have been kneeling before a fire, boiling water. Suddenly a wind ripped through his rooms and leaves from a branch outside his window fell into the boiling water. The pleasant aroma filled the entire room and prompted the emperor to try this odd mixture, which he thoroughly enjoyed.

**Travis:** It seems like it's always supposed to— like, it's told in such a way of like, "And it was fate." Or it was like, the gods wanted me to drink this drink. Like, it always feels like when people have that "I accidentally invented this thing." That it's like, "And then just, it all came together and it was supposed to be. It was meant to be."

**Teresa:** The other side of this coin is that he accidentally poisoned himself while searching for edible grains, and he chewed a tea leaf, which cured him.

**Travis:** Okay. I thought you were gonna say like, "And he drank that tea, and it was good, but he did accidentally poison himself, so."

**Teresa:** [laughs] No. I mean, it doesn't really matter if this is accurate or not, right? Because it's about the history and about how it is, you know, kind of ingrained in culture, right? So it's not really about how it was discovered. Um, but the standard practice became, uh, you were to roast the tea leaves, pack them into portable cakes, then grind that into powder before mixing in boiling water. What does this sound like... to you?

**Travis:** Tea?

**Teresa:** Matcha.

**Travis:** Oh, okay. I didn't know where you were going with that. Yeah, sure. Yeah, matcha. Yeah.

**Teresa:** It sounds like matcha. Um, and, you know, this is how you make matcha.

**Travis:** Did you know— I don't know if I've ever told you this, but I'm a matcha man.

**Teresa:** You are?

**Travis:** [singing] I'm a matcha matcha man.

**Teresa:** Mmm. Mm, mm, mm.

**Travis:** Your face actually looks like you kind of liked that joke, and I couldn't tell.

**Teresa:** And then later these portable cakes—

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** —would become the loose leaf tea, right? So instead of grinding it up and actually mixing it with the water, you would just leave the leaves in their kind of, like, shrively state, and you steep them in the water.

**Travis:** I saw a TikTok not too long ago of— and someone was reacting to it. And so it was like, you know, the side-by-side. But the original poster— and God bless it, it's reached a point now in society where I watch these things and I'm like, "Is this a joke? Is it real? I cannot tell."

And they were like, "I've never had tea before, so I got some tea."

**Teresa:** That's the— the, uh, the catchphrase for the internet. "Is this a joke? Is this real? I cannot tell."

**Travis:** [simultaneously] Is this a joke? I cannot tell.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And they had gotten— they got a bag of tea, and then they cut it open. And they were like, "And you just pour it in the water, and I think it just dissolves in the water."

So they, like, opened up the tea bag, poured it into the hot water, and they were stirring it, and they were drinking it like, "I don't get the appeal of this."

And it's like... is that— are you being funny? Or did you really think that that's how you made tea? 'Cause there's instructions on a tea bag box, and I don't know what's happening here.

**Teresa:** Well, if you're brewing tea in a pot, you can make tea like that.

**Travis:** But this was just a cup.

**Teresa:** You can— you can make tea like that. That's how one of the, like— the ethos of the swirling of the tea leaves to read your fortune works.

**Travis:** Well, so that is from— like, you do the loose leaf tea, and there's always some sediment that gets in there, right? But this person just poured, like, a bag of, like... you know, uh... the, you know, Lady Grey or whatever. Just cut it open instead of steeping it in the water and poured it in and stirred it, is what I'm saying they did.

**Teresa:** I don't know why we're fighting about this.

**Travis:** I don't— I feel like you're missing the point—

**Teresa:** If you— if you don't drink—

**Travis:** —of my interesting story.

**Teresa:** If you don't drink the sediment, you can make tea that way.

**Travis:** I feel like you're missing the point of my hilarious story.

**Teresa:** Anyway... so, matcha green tea became so popular that it created, like, a Chinese tea culture, right? And the tea became the subject of art and poetry, and a favorite drink of the emperors because, you know, they set the fashion, right? Um, and this is when foam artists started whisking the tea to use it as a canvas. You know, like we see in coffee art today, right?

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Um, during the 9th century, during the Tang Dynasty, a Japanese monk brought the first tea plant to Japan, and it was so popular that the Japanese

created their own specific culture around tea, right? Giving birth to the Japanese tea ceremony.

**Travis:** Yes, which we talked about.

**Teresa:** You should check out that ep. Uh, 14th century China was the main country that held, like, a virtual monopoly on tea trees. So we have porcelain, and silk, and tea. Those were the three main goods that China exported. Um, and it gave the country great power and economic influence.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** But things really blew up in the 1600s when Dutch Traders brought large loads of tea to Europe.

**Travis:** Is this the, like, East Indie Company? East Indian?

**Teresa:** Not quite.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Not quite.

**Travis:** 'Cause that was Dutch. I do know that.

**Teresa:** A little— a little later. This was when it was first introduced, and many credit Queen Catherine of Braganza, a Portuguese noblewoman, who made tea very popular when she married King Charles II.

**Travis:** Is that the one the spaniels are named after? No one knows.

**Teresa:** No one knows.

**Travis:** No one know— I mean, sure— I'm sure someone knows. But I don't.

**Teresa:** Okay so, by—

**Travis:** Sometimes no one knows—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —just means that Travis doesn't know.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Doesn't know. So by the 1700s, uh, tea sold in Europe for 10 times the price of coffee, right? Because it was still only grown in China. And this was actually when the clipper ship was invented, because it could sail much faster than a regular ship, meaning it could bring tea back quicker.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Um, and this is also when, because the demand was so high, shady merchants would even cut their tea with additives.

**Travis:** Just puttin' in grass clippings.

**Teresa:** Yep. Really.

**Travis:** I bet that was one. Grass clippings. Some dirt.

**Teresa:** Twigs, sawdust. Sheep... dung.

**Travis:** Okay. Well, not quite that. But did I ever tell you— there was one where we had some tea that we bought for Bebe to do in, like, tea parties. Completely non-caffeinated, you know, completely...

**Teresa:** Was it the flowers?

**Travis:** No, it was bubblegum tea?

**Teresa:** Ohhh.

**Travis:** And it had, like, little bubblegum balls in it. Which, don't get me wrong, I'm sure added flavor and stuff to it. Right? 'Cause it's, like, sugary, and it's bubblegum. But I was like, "Huh. That does— huh. Interesting. Okay."

**Teresa:** Yeah. It was weird. I didn't really like it either.

**Travis:** Now, the flower ones—

**Teresa:** Was not my cup of tea.

[both laugh]

**Travis:** The flower ones.

**Teresa:** The flower ones were so pretty.

**Travis:** Oh, well they do these things— and we've had it before, too— where it's tea— it is like a flower that's, like, closed up, right? And dried out. And as you add hot water, as it soaks in the hot water it, like, blooms, and it's such a cool-looking thing. It's also a good way to know your tea's fully steeped. [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** I have something to share with you about that.

**Travis:** Oh no.

**Teresa:** And I'm— I'm willing to tell you about this now, even though I was gonna save it for later. That's technically not tea. It's an infusion.

**Travis:** [gasps] I've been lied to!

**Teresa:** [hesitantly] Colloquial... colloquially...

**Travis:** Uh, I—

**Teresa:** Colloqually? Colloquial?

**Travis:** Collo—colloquially. Collo— now it sounds weird to me.

**Teresa:** We call it tea.

**Travis:** Colloquially?

**Teresa:** But it's not tea if it's not made from—

**Travis:** Speaking in a colloquial way.

**Teresa:** —the specific plant. Um, I have it later.

**Travis:** Okay. I need a minute to recover from this.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** So how about, like, a promo for another Max Fun show, and I'm gonna take some deep breaths over here with my head between my knees.

[theme music plays]

[music plays]

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[music and ad end]

**Travis:** Okay. We're back. I've recovered.

**Teresa:** I will get to that plant later. I'm sorry I had to, like, tease that spoiler for you.

**Travis:** Teas...

**Teresa:** [groans]

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Okay. So, we've gotten—

**Travis:** Oh! I should've said I need to let the information steep. Ugh! Okay, go on.

**Teresa:** Uh, we've gotten to now the 1800s, um, and we have the opium wars.

**Travis:** Okay.



**Teresa:** Because tea played a major role. Tea was so expensive, and China was the only place to get it, that people started bartering— people. [laughs quietly] I mean the English— started bartering... for tea, by plying... the Chinese with opium.

**Travis:** With opium, okay.

**Teresa:** With opium. Um, and, you know, this is finally where a British covert mission was given by the English government, and they commissioned a botanist named Robert Fortune to steal tea from China. He stole a whole plant.

**Travis:** Oh boy. Not cool.

**Teresa:** Well... it gets worse. [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh, man! Okay.

**Teresa:** Not only did he steal a whole plant, he probably also trafficked talented tea workers, because people didn't know how to take care of it, right?

**Travis:** Oh, and when we say trafficked you mean, like, captured people? Like, took them.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Travis:** Oh no.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** Oh no.

**Teresa:** Yeah. It's, uh— and he took them into India. Darjeeling, India.

**Travis:** Okay. Well, I know that name.

**Teresa:** Right, which was a British colony.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and so there's a problematic history.

**Travis:** Yeah, def!

**Teresa:** But it is the reason that tea was able to spread to other parts of the world. And if you want to read a book about it, you should read *For All the Tea in China*.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Okay. So... other than China, India, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Vietnam, the only other place that tea has been commercially grown is South Carolina in the late 1700s.

**Travis:** This is what I'm say— okay. But this is what I think of southern— like, iced tea is a different thing. But late 1700s... we're talking slavery in there as well.

**Teresa:** We are, we are.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and there are over 3000 varieties of tea, most commonly classified as white, green, oolong, and black. Um, and here's the thing, right? The camellia sinensis is the black tea shrub. All of these different types of tea and tea preparations come from this plant.

**Travis:** What? Wait. They all come from the same plant?

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay. But what about, like, green tea, white tea... black tea?

**Teresa:** It has to do with the preparation.

**Travis:** What about oolong?

**Teresa:** Also preparation.

**Travis:** Rooibos.

**Teresa:** Not— maybe it's not really tea.

**Travis:** Oh?

**Teresa:** If it doesn't come from that plant...

**Travis:** Oh?

**Teresa:** ... it might be, like... specifically— you know how you talk about tomatoes, right?

**Travis:** All the time.

**Teresa:** How tomatoes are technically a fruit, but culinarily you wouldn't put it in a fruit salad, right?

**Travis:** Yes. I tried to explain— the other day—

**Teresa:** [wheezes]

**Travis:** —my five-year-old, Bebe Lee McElroy— I said— we were talking about nuts. And I was like, "Yeah, you know. Like a nut. Like a peanut."

And she goes, "Uh... "

And I am not exaggerating when I do the— when I do this impression.

"Uh... peanuts are a legume."

And I was like, "Okay. Okay." And I said, "But culinarily they're nuts."

And she's like, "What does that mean?"

And then I say, "It means I'm right!"

Anyways, uh, she's too smart and it weirds me out. I love her so much.

**Teresa:** So there are things that we call tea that aren't really tea, because they don't come from that plant or its, you know, various, like, relatives.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Right. So you talked about the different types of tea.

**Travis:** I did.

**Teresa:** White tea.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Is the most delicate of the major tea types, because the leaves are not exposed to fire after they are plucked.

**Travis:** Okay. I also know it to be... unless I'm mistaken, as a rule, not caffeinated. This is— when I think about teas, this is literally how I think about them. White tea is usually, like, listed as, like, herbal tea, or it's not caffeinated, or something along those lines.

**Teresa:** Um...

**Travis:** Maybe not entirely true across the board, but usually white tea is not caffeinated. Green tea varies from being mildly caffeinated to incredibly caffeinated, and black tea is almost always heavily caffeinated.

**Teresa:** Sure. That's a great rule of thumb. I think that it has a lot to do with parts per million. So, as much as you drink is the amount of caffeination. So it's not about being decaf... feinated.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** It's just about being, like, the amounts, right? Very, very small amounts.

**Travis:** If you're looking for heavily, uh, matcha is usually pretty caffeinated. And gunpowder green tea I really enjoy.

**Teresa:** Ooh.

**Travis:** Now, I like black tea too, but sometimes you're not looking for, like, that complex, rich, uh, chocolatey, you know, nutty. You want something light. Gunpowder green tea. It's great.

**Teresa:** So, white tea leaves are plucked young, then they are steamed, dried, and then you are good to go. And it results in a very delicate, sweet, and light, subtle flavors.

**Travis:** The one I most think of is, like, white jasmine.

**Teresa:** Sure, yeah. Again, it can have notes of jasmine, or melon, or citrus. Um, and it is believed that the white tea has the highest antioxidant properties, uh, and may also be in large amounts a natural antibacterial. Um, and when you brew white tea, you don't want to brew it in boiling water. You will burn the leaves that way. So about 175 degrees. And listen, if you don't have a thermometer or a temperature kettle, what you can do is boil water like normal, right? And then drop in about six regular sized ice cubes. Once they're melted, you should be good to go.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and it really should look, uh, slightly different from water. It really should not look like... you know, when I think of tea I think of, like, tea stains, right? When you were, like, in social studies and you used the tea—

**Travis:** You make an old map.

**Teresa:** —[through laughter] to make old maps.

**Travis:** When you make an old map! Just say making old maps.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Not that color. That's too long. You've burnt it. Anyway, next. Green tea. Um... the tea leaves are plucked, then withered, then steamed or pan-fried to bring out different flavor profiles.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Then the leaves are rolled and dried, and then ready for your cuppa.

**Travis:** Now, in my opinion, green tea is, uh... I like— like I said, I like black tea, I like green tea, I like white tea. But I think green tea is one of the more versatile as far as, like, does it taste like mint? Does it taste like grass? Does it taste like— like, I think you can go through different varieties, and depending on what, uh,

you know, how it's prepared or whatever, it tastes like, uh— it can be very different.

**Teresa:** Yes, agreed. Some of the proponents of tea would say that it is also high in antioxidants, which are good for your skin, might be good at fighting off allergies, and it might even help you live longer.

**Travis:** Well, what— what doesn't, these days? Well, there's a lot of things. Actually, now that I say it, there's a lot of stuff that won't help you live longer.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, not... for boiling water either. Um, and you would do it about the same as you would white tea, but then steep it for, like, three minutes. Um, and most people think, including myself, that they don't like green tea. I have never prepared it in this way, and so it's possible that I have just burnt it, which is why I don't like it.

**Travis:** You don't like green tea?!

**Teresa:** Hm.

**Travis:** What?! Not like a mint? Like a— there's no... well, now I could see where, knowing you, that, like, matcha and, like, gunpowder, like, the more grassier ones aren't for you. But that's surprises me that you don't like a light, like, Moroccan mint or, you know, light mint— ugh. Oh my gosh.

**Teresa:** No, not really.

**Travis:** You just haven't had it right. It's my favorite kind.

**Teresa:** Oolong is next, and it's pretty cool, because the tea seems to have, like, a kind of balance of a lot of other stuff. So the flavor profile of both green and black, combining the best of both worlds, right? And so the flavor actually comes from the tea leaves are shaken or bruised after they've been left out a while to wilt. And this is kind of like, you know, if you've ever seen your bartender, like, slap a leaf, right? A mint leaf or whatever. [laughs] To bring out the oils, right?

**Travis:** Mm-hmm, yeah. It's just such a funny image. I know exactly what you meant, but like, "If you've ever seen 'em get in a fight with a tree."

**Teresa:** [laughs] Um, the bruising process is very similar. So they'll usually roll the tea leaves by hand in big bunches to get the leaves to release their flavors, right? Um, and then the seeds are partially fermented or oxidized before they are dried as well. Um, and this all brings out oolong's multi textured, slightly floral and vibrant color.

**Travis:** Okay. So, I looked it up because, uh, I wanted to make sure I wasn't talking out my butt as I often do. So basically, talking about caffeination and tea.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** So, uh, your herbals and your rooiboses are most likely the ones that aren't actually from tea, right? That they are different flowers, or fruits, or whatever, what-have-you, to get that flavor. No caffeine, right? Herbals— if it says herbal, you pretty guarantee no caffeine, right? White, light caffeine. Like, 10 to 15 milligrams, light, light, light.

**Teresa:** Like I said, it's about parts per million.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? You drink a lot of white tea, you're still gonna get caffeine.

**Travis:** Yeah. And then when you get to green tea, once again it's gonna vary, right? 'Cause like I said, when you get into, like, gunpowder green tea, it gets up there pretty high. But then between green and black is oolong. So oolong has a little more than green, and a little less than black. Then black tea, then matcha, then like mate, so like yerba mate. Which if you've never had yerba mate, you should. It is an experience. So basically yerba mate, a lot like you were talking about, right? You— it's in a special cup where you drink with a straw that connects to the bottom of the cup. So all of that tea sits on top. All of the stuff sits on top, and you're drinking the liquid from the bottom out, right? So that— you know what I'm saying? So it looks like—

**Teresa:** I mean, I can definitely picture it.

**Travis:** So the straw is like a tail, and you get—

**Teresa:** Like a teacup— like a teapot.

**Travis:** Sure, yeah.

**Teresa:** You drink it out of the pot.

**Travis:** And you're drinking it out of the bottom of it, so it all gets brewed there. It's an interesting experience. And, I mean, it's also a very unique taste and, you know, profile— I think it's very, uh... very, you know, green and grassy and, you know, smelling of... nature. It's great. I love it.

**Teresa:** Um, so oolong tea—

**Travis:** You gotta kind of drink it through your teeth, though. 'Cause there's, like—

**Teresa:** [simultaneously] Yeah, stuff.

**Travis:** —you don't wanna get... [hisses] it's not filtered, right? It doesn't have— sorry, it's not strained.

**Teresa:** Oolong tea is said to be great for giving one a youthful glow, because it's said to be good for your skin.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Um, to brew it, again, you still don't want boiling water. I think this is the thing where I have, like, messed up my entire life. Um, before we got a temperature kettle—

**Travis:** Okay, wait. To clarify, what— you— this is a thing that, your entire life, you have done wrong. Not—

**Teresa:** [laughs loudly]

**Travis:** —something that has messed up your entire life. "If I could go back and change one thing... "

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "To put it all on the right track... "



**Teresa:** No, you're right, you're right. That is what I meant.

**Travis:** Yeah. It's—[laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "I think this is the one thing that has messed up my whole life!"

**Teresa:** We got a temperature gauge, like, kettle that you can set for a specific temperature, and it has really changed the way I think about these things, is what I'm saying.

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** So, you still don't want boiling water for your oolong. Um, you want to bring it to just under a boil. That's, like, 190 degrees. Um, and then you can steep your tea for, again, about three minutes. I have also been steeping my tea way too long.

**Travis:** Yeah, most people do.

**Teresa:** Black tea, last tea. It is the strongest, like you said— I mean, if you don't count the pulverized leaves, matcha, yerba mate.

**Travis:** Yeah. Speciali— you're talking about— it's the highest caffeinated varietal, and not, like, the specific when you get into, like, matcha and mate and stuff like that, yeah.

**Teresa:** Sure. Sure, sure, sure, sure, sure. Um, so what you do is you pick the tea leaves and then you leave them out for a while to wilt, and then they repeat the same bruising process. And what makes it different is the leaves are fully fermented or oxidized, right? Instead of being partly, like we did for the last step. Um, and that after that it's dried and fired, and then ready to brew.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, I have always enjoyed black teas better.

**Travis:** Well, you are a chocolate person in general.

**Teresa:** I am. You can get cocoa, or cinnamon flavors, or even pepper flavors, right? And this is why I like it with milk and sugar!

**Travis:** Yeah. You like, um— you like your tea to be closer to like a hot chocolate.

**Teresa:** Sure, sure. I mean, it doesn't have to be chocolatey, but I am one of those— I like milk and sugar in tea, and that's what I like.

**Travis:** Yeah, that's fine. Listen, that's fine!

**Teresa:** [holding back laughter] I have a little, uh, tea of my own to spill.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** The milk first or the tea first debate.

**Travis:** Okay. Oh, are you asking?

**Teresa:** You're staring at me blankly.

**Travis:** No. I— I am not going to fall into your trap.

**Teresa:** Oh, okay.

**Travis:** Because I know you were looking for an answer, and then I would be wrong. No matter what I was gonna say, I know would be wrong.

**Teresa:** Okay. We may have found the answer.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And it probably lies in—

**Travis:** Same time. Pour 'em at the same time.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Depending upon your socioeconomic status.

**Travis:** Oh?

**Teresa:** And what type of teacups you could afford.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** So... if you had teacups that were of poorer quality, you would be obliged to pour your milk in first because pouring the hot tea water into the milk makes it so the shock of the temperature is not so high for the teacup.

**Travis:** Less likely to break.

**Teresa:** Less likely to break. But if you could afford very expensive teacups and teaware, then you could afford to show off by pouring the hot, hot water into your teacups, and they wouldn't shatter. And then you could put the milk on top.

**Travis:** Ohh. Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh-huh.

**Travis:** Okay, I see. You know what I do think we don't do enough of over here in the states?

**Teresa:** What?

**Travis:** Uh, sugar cubes.

**Teresa:** Oh, yeah!

**Travis:** Don't do sugar— we gotta get into— hey! I'm— United States of America? Get into sugar cubes in a big way this year. I think that's the— I think it's time for us to all get into sugar cubes.

**Teresa:** Well, I can see why— I can see why it's not as practical?

**Travis:** I thought you'd be on board with me!

**Teresa:** I am! I love the idea of sugar cubes.

**Travis:** Thank you.

**Teresa:** I love using sugar cubes. But—

**Travis:** I like how much horses like 'em.

**Teresa:** If... [laughs quietly] okay.

**Travis:** They do! I think.

**Teresa:** They— I mean, that is what movies and TV tell us. I've never fed one. A horse.

**Travis:** Me neither! And I'm sure you're not actually supposed to.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Like, I know my daughters would love sugar cubes. I'm not gonna feed sugar cubes to my daughters, so why would I give it to a horse?

**Teresa:** A packet is a little easier to, um... keep, you know? Because, you know, the sugar cubes, they come in this nice box, and you open the box, and then you expose all the sugar to insects, and air. But if you had—

**Travis:** You need a sugar cube bowl! You need a cube bowl. [laughs]

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** You know? For your cubes!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Again, it's not airtight the way that a packet is, a little, like, paper pack is.

**Travis:** We've been to the moon. We can create an airtight cube bowl. Who's with me, science?

**Teresa:** You'd go— you'd go to the moon.

**Travis:** I would if I could! Are you kidding me? That'd be amazing!

**Teresa:** So... what have we learned?

**Travis:** I don't know.

**Teresa:** We've learned that... all leaf water is not tea.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Right? We've learned that—

**Travis:** Most teas, don't boil your water.

**Teresa:** Don't boil your water for most teas.

**Travis:** You want it just below boiling. Uh, unless it's black tea. I think black tea is fine to get it up to, like, 212.

**Teresa:** And we've learned that tea is one of the many things that white people stole from other cultures.

**Travis:** Oh yeah. Oh, absolutely. And frankly, not just, uh, the tea itself, but the term tea! Like, spill the tea, all that? Stolen.

**Teresa:** All that, stolen. So let's go and enjoy a cuppa of our, um— our stolen hot leaf water.

**Travis:** Ugh. Oh, gosh.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh boy. Alright, well that's gonna do it for us! [fake laughter] Uh, I have to say thank you to our researcher, Alex, without whom we would not be able to make this show.

**Teresa:** Of course.

**Travis:** Thank you to our editor, Rachel, without whom we would not be able to make this show. Thank you to you for listening. We could make this show without you, but why? Um, as you're listening to this, we are going to be at Dragon Con this weekend. We've got a *Shmanners* thing, a *Shmanners* panel, a *Shmanners*... Panners.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** A Shmanel? I don't know.

**Teresa:** Shmanel! That's it.

**Travis:** A Shmanel.

**Teresa:** It's a Shmanel.

**Travis:** Uh, we're doing that, so you can check that out. Um, and Teresa is gonna be there. I mean, I'm gonna be there too, but Teresa will be there, and that's awesome. Um, let's see. What else? Uh... go check out all the merch at [mcelroymerch.com](http://mcelroymerch.com). Check out all the other shows at [mcelroy.family](http://mcelroy.family). Uh, what else, Teresa?

**Teresa:** Well, we always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. That's @shmannerscast, and we usually get some great questions from there regarding our topics. Thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

Um, also please continue to submit your topics and idioms. I'm looking forward to another idiom episode soon. Um, to [shmannerscast@gmail.com](mailto:shmannerscast@gmail.com). And then say hi to Alex, because she reads every email.

**Travis:** Um, and if you want to look for, like, the full Dragon Con schedule, you can find it on Twitter. I believe it's just @mcelroyfamily is our Twitter account, and on Instagram it's @themcelroyfamily, and we post that image there. And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

**Teresa:** No RSVP required!

**Travis:** You've been listening to *Shmanners*...

**Teresa:** Manners, *Shmanners*! Get it!

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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