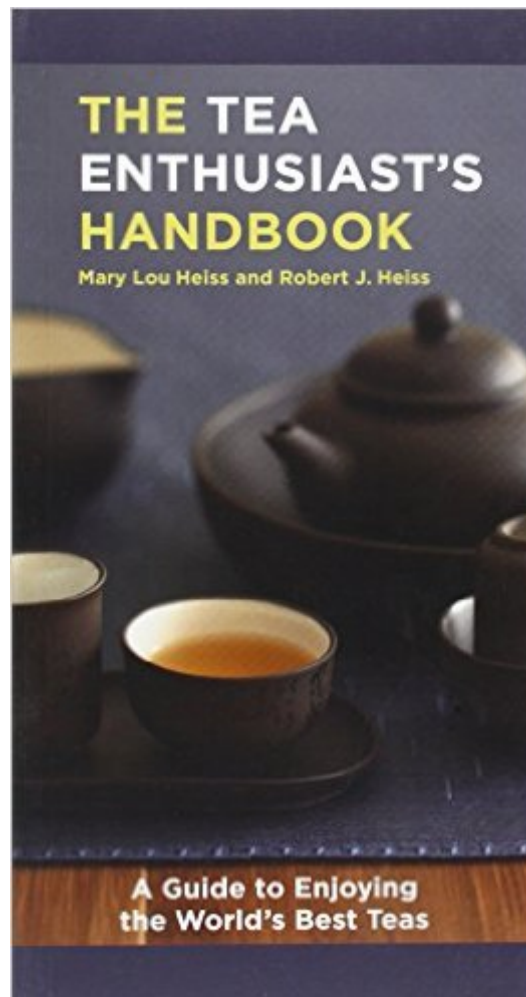


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# The Tea Enthusiast's Handbook: A Guide To Enjoying The World's Best Teas



## Synopsis

**AROUND THE WORLD IN A TEACUP** Did you know that tea is the most widely consumed beverage on the planet after water? Or that all of the world's tea originates from only three varieties of a single plant? While a cup of tea may be a simple pleasure for most of us, there are a dizzying number of tastes from which to choose. And every tea, whether a delicately sweet green tea from Japan or a bracing, brisk Darjeeling black, tells a story in the cup about the land that nurtured it and the tea-making skills that transformed it. In this authoritative guide, veteran tea professionals Mary Lou and Robert J. Heiss provide decades of expertise on understanding tea and its origins, the many ways to buy tea, and how to explore and enjoy the six classes of tea (green, yellow, white, oolong, black, and Pu-erh). Additional advice on steeping the perfect cup and storing tea at home, alongside a gallery of more than thirty-five individual teas with tasting notes and descriptions make *The Tea Enthusiast's Handbook* a singular source of both practical information and rich detail about this fascinating beverage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There are few books about tea that add to the discussion about tea in any meaningful way, but Mary Lou and Robert Heiss's new book, 'The Tea Enthusiast's Handbook' is one of them. This is a book about quality, although they sidestep the word because it has very little meaning in the industry, and instead use the word 'soundness', saying "We prefer to begin judging the potential merits of a tea by evaluating its soundness". Their book points the reader in a sound direction. Serious students of tea may find that they disagree with some of the details, but it is indisputable that the path to the world's

best teas is clearly defined in this book. The international tea industry has never been clear about this path because it points to China and unblended, unflavored tea, and the established industry has a hard time delivering such tea to consumers. Even though teas from other areas are mentioned, the heart of the book is about Chinese tea. China, after all, is where tea originated, and definitions about tea need to be consistent with Chinese standards. They have taken a risk in writing this book. The industry has not been very supportive of writers that dare to write books that challenge conventional wisdom. It may not be obvious to the people reading that are outside of the industry, but a book like this really is a game changer. People will start to look at the tea that they are buying from the conventional sources and will start to realize that tea that they are buying and is being sold for 'good quality' is in reality very 'sound'. Then the open secret that people in the industry know, and increasingly 'tea enthusiasts' are becoming aware of, is that there is much better tea out there, it's just that it is difficult to come by in the US and Europe.

This is a good introduction to some of the true (not tisane or flavored) teas. However, I have some of the same complaints as other reviewers: namely that there didn't exist a thorough enough description of enough teas, nor did the book include all the most famous teas from China, Japan, Sri Lanka, etc. also, I feel that the heiss' purist ways led them away from listing the wonderful teas that have sprung up around the world in Japan, Tibet, India, etc. Most importantly, and I must preface this with the fact that this is a valuable contribution to a food item that has relatively little written about it for the general public, I did not appreciate the author's attitude when I got the chance to meet them in Northampton, MA. Regrettably, I did not get a chance to speak with Mary Lou. However, Robert seemed a little ticked off by my interest in tea and even told me, quite ironically because his book mentions it so tersely, that my understanding of storing oolong tea is too simplistic. I was also told that I must not have authentic teas because they looked slightly different than the teas he had. Upon purchasing from him and taking the tea home to compare, they were exact in smell and taste. While I will not recant every bit of our short conversation, I will say that it left me with a bad taste in my mouth (no pun intended). Robert could not be bothered sweeping his store to sell me any tea, and answered all my questions condescendingly. The conversation was almost like a Saturday Night Live skit, just not very funny to me in the moment. I can say that I will never shop there again for the sheer principle. I believe that those who are so devoted and excited about something such as tea should either be as excited to educate others about it, or keep it wholly to themselves.

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