



Tea *in* Skin care

Japanese Green Tea Treatments

by Donna Tokugawa

All “real tea” comes from one plant: *Camellia sinensis*. However this generalization is equivalent to saying that all wine comes from a grape. Cultivars, terroir and processing are what make the difference. Many plants such as chamomile, mint and lavender can be steeped or brewed into a tisane for very different yet powerful benefits. It is most important to understand the enormous medicinal importance of tea from the *Camellia sinensis*, and its application in skin care.

Tea varieties include white, yellow, green, oolong, red and black, all of which are abundant in nutritional properties. However all teas are not created equally, and not every tea should be used in skin care. Loose leaf tea is significantly superior to tea bags when it comes to skin care. Tea bags use materials that may have been bleached or contain petroleum oil by-products, have a gluten seal and generally lower quality tea.



EPIDEMIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

shows green tea to be the best. Japanese green teas are grown and processed in a very unique manner, undergoing minimal oxidative processing, providing the clean perfection indigenous to a culture deeply rooted in esthetics. Japanese loose leaf green teas have been used as both nutraceuticals and cosmeceuticals since ancient times, and its no wonder why! Internally, its nutritional properties with super antioxidant properties scavenge free radicals. In traditional Chinese and Indian medicine, practitioners have used green tea as a stimulant, diuretic and astringent, and in Japan, it is hailed for its undisputed effects on health, beauty and longevity.

GREEN TEA PROPERTIES AND BENEFITS

Japanese green tea has no preservatives or additives and contains an abundance of beneficial properties, including the following:

Catechins are naturally occurring antioxidants that function as anti-inflam-

matory, anti-cancer agents. They help stabilize collagen and elastin, reduce inflammation, regulate the immune system, promote enzymatic activity within the body and support healthy weight maintenance.

Antibacterial properties reduce acne and promote healing following chemical peels and microdermabrasion procedures.

Theanine. Green tea contains high levels of this property, which relaxes and calms the mind, creates a positive effect on mood, rehydrates the body and helps eliminate toxins. Used on the skin, active ingredients fortify cells, supporting a healthy foundation to prevent and defend.

Antioxidants work to scavenge free radicals. Green tea's high concentrations of antioxidants are rich in flavonoids, with the predominance of caf-

feine and catechins (epigallocatechin gallate and epigallocatechin (EGCG and EGC)), making it a panacea of sorts.

Amino acids, known as polypeptides and polysaccharides, penetrate the skin, providing antibacterial, UVA and UVB protection, enhancing the ability to absorb and retain moisture on the epidermis, penetrating down to the dermis and improving the texture and appearance in general.

Caffeine and tannins give skin a firmer appearance, soften fine lines, lift eyes and reduce puffiness — not only for eyes but also for ankles, thighs and tummies.

L-theanine is an amino acid found only in *Camellia sinensis* and some mushrooms. This powerhouse stimulates the buildup of collagen, calms the mind, rehydrates the body and helps eliminate toxins, all of which contributes to radiant skin.

INCORPORATE INTO YOUR PRACTICE

Japanese green tea is such a powerful ingredient that an entire spa menu can be created using little more than the tea. It can be utilized for quick, easy yet very powerful results. It can also be used in a fill-in treatment on a busy day if your spa is running late between clients to buy goodwill. Consider the following example of a complete yet easy treatment.



1 Your client's organic oasis begins as they slip their feet into a warm tea soaking bowl. Any swelling in the ankles is reduced, their skin is softer, and any blisters they have begin to heal. Because the body absorbs products from the skin, they begin to be infused with the tea.

2 Next, bloom a hand wipe, using the very same Japanese green tea, and use this bamboo towelette to hydrate your client's hands, paying special attention to their nails and cuticles to prevent hang nails due to skin dryness. Continue massaging the tea into the hands, as this is the first part of skin to show signs of aging. Provide a spritzer bottle of the tea for clients to rehydrate the hands following the treatment.

3 Place a warm herbal tea and flaxseed neck wrap on them to relax their shoulders.

4 Bloom a bamboo fabric facial mask (warm or cold depending on climate), which allows this tea to create magic on the face. Hand your client a mirror and ask them to look for an area where they want to see the most improvement. Apply the mask to this area and let it sit for at least 15 minutes.

5 Pour a cup of the tea (hot or cold depending on climate) for your client to sip while the mask sinks in.

6 After 15 minutes, remove the mask. Show them the mirror again to see the outstanding results!



AMAZING ADD-ONS

Upselling with Japanese green tea offered as an add-on to any treatment can easily and effectively improve the results of any services. Consider the following examples:

Facials. The first steeping of tea contains all the caffeine, which tightens skin and reduces the appearance of fine lines. On younger skin, use a green tea mask after extractions or chemical work. For mature skin, use before the moisturizing step for better absorption.

Back Facials. Incorporate green tea to help reduce acne, as well as heal and calm the skin post-waxing.

Foot Soaks and Body Baths. Place

the tea in a muslin bag and add to the warm water for about 10 minutes and remove. Antibacterial properties heal, and slimming properties benefit the hips, thighs and tummy while soothing, smoothing and moisturizing properties enhance the overall appearance and feel of the feet and body. **Remember that the tea is absorbed, an important consideration for expectant or new mothers, as well as those recovering from surgery.*

Steam Rooms and Saunas. These amenities greatly benefit from using tea. The antibacterial properties keep the rooms fresh and clean, and tea can simply be replaced for water. This can also help equipment last longer and perform better.

Today we are seeing an aging population, combined with a shift

toward less invasive procedures, increasing consumer awareness and the escalating desire to return to nature. Considering these factors, along with the plethora of Japanese green tea's outstanding qualities, it is clear why its value extends far beyond simply being a refreshing beverage. ■



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frequently speaks and educates on teas with a specific focus on Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese teas. Tokugawa is one of the founders of Chado-En, a tea importer and wholesaler, and The Taste of Tea Lounge and Relaxation Tea Spa in Healdsburg, Calif. Email her at donna@thetasteoftea.com.