

## **Herbal Iced Teas**

**By Marge Synder**

Preparing a glass of refreshing Iced Tea isn't simply pouring your leftover morning tea over ice cubes. No. In fact, there are 3 methods of making perfect iced tea: Cold brew, Hot brew, and Sun Tea.

The principal part of making tea (besides using the best tea) is the water you use. If your kitchen faucet water meets your standards, then by all means, use it. But if you want clear unadulterated water, then distilled or bottled unfiltered spring water would be your choice.

The same criteria go for the ice cubes. Cubes from your refrigerator are usually made from the same water as your kitchen faucet, so that settles that problem! But if you desire clear unfiltered cubes, your best bet is using bottled distilled or unfiltered water. However, that means using those old-timey plastic or aluminum gadgets. But the advantage of those is you can substitute colorful fruit juices or already made tea...your choice.

**HOT BREW** is the fastest way to make a pot of iced Tea-and we're referring to just one pot. Adding cubes to your brew dilutes the final product, so you need to double the amount of tea or herbs you normally use in your tea pot. Normally 4-6 bags per pot (for an 8-cup tea pot). Tea bags and loose tea are interchangeable. Use boiling water and steep for 10-12 minutes or until you like the flavor. Strain the tea pot and let it come to room temperature. Serve it right then with ice cubes or refrigerate until later.

**COLD BREW** requires advanced planning and it's usually for a larger quantity. It's quite easy though. Use the largest container you have-gallon jugs are best. Add 2 or 3 as many base teas (black, white, green, or herbal combinations) plus your fresh herbs. Immediately place in the refrigerator, covered, overnight for a minimum of 6-8 hours. Remove the tea and herbs and serve over ice cubes. It can keep refrigerated for several days.

**SUN TEA**, the Tea of the 60's, although it was originally invented in the early 1900's. Apparently, the word didn't get out until the 60's-70's, so it's naturally associated with the Hippie Culture.

To prepare Sun Tea use a large glass container-not plastic (today they actually sell these tea jars in department stores) and add tea (bags are easiest to use) and any fresh herbs or fruit slices you want. Cover and place outside in a sunny location for at least 6 hours. Strain and remove tea bags. You can serve it anytime, although at first, you'll probably use lots of ice cubes. It's best to refrigerate it for several hours. It will last several days.

## TIPS ON ICED TEA MAKING:

Choosing a base tea will probably be your biggest decision. Green, black, white, combinations, herbal, non-herbal, fruity, floral, caffeinated, non-caffeinated, or medicinal-the amounts will vary based on your taste. And use any of the tea making methods: Cold Brew, Hot brew, or Sun Tea.

There are tons of things to add to your base tea and deciding is your chance to be creative. You can add fruit slices like: lemon, lime or orange, fresh cherries, pineapple slices, whole or cut-up strawberries, even watermelon. I'm sure you can think of more.

Then there are the herbs. Use them singly or in combination with other herbs or fruit. Here are just a few: ginger, mint, rosemary, lemon balm, lemon verbena, rose geranium, hibiscus, thyme, lemon grass, basil, anise hyssop, lavender, sage, rose hips and medicinal. The choice is yours.

Tea drinkers are adamant about putting sweeteners in their tea. It's common knowledge that Southerners always add sugar, particularly to Iced Tea. You have to go out of your way to find tea that is just plain.

But once in a while, sweet tea, especially iced tea, is satisfying. Here are just a couple things you might want to try to sweeten your tea: honey, sugar, agave, and homemade sugar syrups like mint, rose geranium, anise hyssop, rosemary, ginger, star anise, lemon verbena, and cardamon pod to name a few.

Try your hand at making iced tea. It's fun and there are so many combinations to taste. Be sure to let the MHS know of your findings.