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A GUIDEBOOK for Tea Devotees

Authors Mary Lou Heiss and Robert J. Heiss provide a field guide to help those wishing to expand their knowledge of the world of tea.

By Angie Brown

So many different types of tea exist, from oolong to pu-erh, that sometimes it can seem overwhelming. For people trying to navigate the wide world of tea varieties, Mary Lou Heiss and Robert J. Heiss have written *The Tea Enthusiast's Handbook: A Guide to Enjoying the World's Best Teas* (Ten Speed Press, 2010), a companion book to *The Story of Tea: A Cultural History and Drinking Guide*, nominated for both the James Beard and IACP awards.

With chapters on purchasing tea, how to steep tea, and tea storage and freshness, in addition to practical discussions on the six classes of tea, this guidebook is chock-full of information for the tea lover. The

authors discuss green, yellow, white, oolong, black, and pu-erh teas, from how the leaves are plucked to oxidation. They also include a handy list of more than 35 teas, with images of cups of each steeped so readers can compare the colors. There are also notes on each tea's flavor, aroma, and style. History is infused into the chapters, along with information on subjects like Korea's harvest year and the background of Darjeeling tea.

One of the most helpful components of this pocket guidebook is the glossary. With definitions of tea terms, such as *firing* and CTC (cut-tear-curl) *manufacture*, the Heisses attempt to make the seemingly confusing aspects of tea and its history accessible and understandable for the reader. While technical terminology is demystified, the authors also want to bring new light to tea tasting, urging readers to use their five senses as they prepare this popular beverage—to touch, smell, and listen, as well as to taste and look.

Through *The Tea Enthusiast's Handbook*, the authors have delivered another guide to exploring tea that any tea devotee will be sure to appreciate and take with them to each new tea experience.

Tea retailers since 1974, Mary Lou and Robert J. Heiss present educational tea workshops and tastings around the country in addition to owning a shop, Tea Trekker. Find out more about them at teatrekker.com, and purchase the book at tenspeed.com, your local bookseller, or wherever books are sold.

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