
Brewing Safe Iced Tea



Iced tea is a favorite beverage, especially in the summer months--over 80 % of the tea consumed in the U.S. each year is iced.

However, which brewing method we use to make our iced tea is important because tea is capable of supporting bacterial growth. Tea leaves can become contaminated with bacteria during the growing, harvesting, and drying process and the nice warm environment created, particularly when brewing sun tea, is perfect for the growth of bacteria. And the extended time that sun tea is left out to brew provides even more time for bacteria to grow to dangerous levels.

There have been foodborne illness outbreaks from improperly brewed iced tea in Washington before and, because of this, WSU Extension recommends the following when making tea:

- Brew tea bags with boiling or very hot (175 degrees F or higher) water for three to five minutes.
- Brew only enough tea that can be consumed within a few hours
- Never maintain brewed tea for more than eight hours at room temperature
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize tea-making equipment regularly
- Store tea bags in a dark, cool and dry place away from strong odors and moisture. Do not store in the refrigerator

The Tea Association of the USA, Inc. suggests these steps to avoid cloudiness when making traditional steeped iced tea.

1. Place one 1-ounce teabag (or four regular-sized tea bags) into a clean sanitized container for each gallon of iced tea desired.
2. Pour one quart of hot water (greater than 175 degrees F but less than boiling) for each tea bag used and steep for 3-5 minutes.
3. Remove tea bag and add 3 quarts of fresh, cool water to yield one gallon of iced tea.

Enjoy your summer and your iced tea.

For more information about making safe iced teas or other Food Safety questions call:

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