



BSI Standards Publication

White tea — Definition

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National foreword

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White tea — Definition

Thé blanc — Définition



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Foreword

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For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: Foreword - Supplementary information

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 34, *Food products*, Subcommittee SC 8, *Tea*.

Introduction

Tea is grown and manufactured in numerous countries of the world and is blended and/or drunk in many more. There is some confusion as to the origins, appearance, and processing parameters for white tea and how this might or does differ from green, black, and other types of tea.

The desired characteristics of white tea and the resulting liquor brewed from this depend upon a number of factors including the parts of the plant used for manufacture and how they are processed.

The objectives of this Technical Report are to specify the plant source and parts from which the white tea is manufactured and to set requirements for production methods and certain physical and chemical characteristics which, if met, are an indication that the tea had been subjected to good production practice. It is a matter for the parties concerned whether to apply the recommendations of this Technical Report as the basis of an International Standard for white tea.

The level of catechins in white and green teas is much higher than in black tea and can be a useful discriminant between these types of tea and black tea. Differentiation between green and white tea might need the use of ratios of the various chemical components, among others.

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White tea — Definition

1 Scope

This Technical Report contains information regarding the manufacture and chemical analysis of the tea referred to as white tea in international trade.

It provides an internationally agreed definition of white tea based on the plant source and production methods used. It explains how the application of these criteria has an effect on the physical and sensory attributes of white tea.

It does not apply to flavoured white tea, blended white tea, and decaffeinated or soluble extracts of white tea.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1

white tea

tea derived solely and exclusively, and produced by acceptable processes, by harvesting and a single withering/drying stage of the bud or bud and tender shoots (one to three leaves) of varieties of the species *Camellia sinensis* (L.) O. Kuntze known to be suitable for making tea for consumption as a beverage

3 Origins of white tea

3.1 Historical origins of white tea

This type of tea has its historical roots in China, more specifically in the Fujian province of South West China and was originally produced from two subvarieties of *Camellia sinensis sinensis*, which were var. *Zhenghe dai bai* and var. *Fuding dai bai*.

White tea should not be defined by its geography and although white tea has been produced for many decades in this region, it is now produced in other regions of China as well as other international tea-producing countries. The harvesting and processing methods used in all regions are generally based upon those originally developed in the Fujian region.

3.2 Descriptive names: black, green, and white teas

Black and green are colour descriptions of bulk property of the dry tea. The colour of the dry leaf matter is a reflection of the level of 'aeration' (formerly known as 'fermentation') that the material receives during primary processing, with green teas having minimal/no aeration and black teas, medium to extensive aeration. This colour is usually also reflected in the liquor, with green teas producing pale yellow-green to amber colour liquors and black teas producing pale amber to deep brown/black liquors. The tastes of these types of tea are also distinctive enough to be easily differentiated by skilled tea tasters.

White tea is named as such not for the bulk colour of the leaves but after the fine white hairs that cover the surface of leaf buds and the underside of the leaf surface. This lends an appearance of 'whiteness' to the leaf material. This is most apparent in grades where the bud alone is harvested, e.g. longevity eyebrow. Other grades such as Pai Mu Dan do not have such obvious leaf hairs but are still considered white tea due to the processing methods used.