

## **Text for the teacher**

### **The tea supply chain steps**

#### **1. Plucking” (Harvesting)**

Plucking is the name of the system they use to harvest tea plants. The hand plucking is a traditional method that involves hundreds of women. Each of these women can collect up to 21 kg of tea leaves during her working day, but with 3,000-4,000 kg of tea leaves you get only 1 kg of unprocessed tea.

After plucking, they transport the tea leaves to the nearest factory.

#### **2. Withering**

When tea leaves arrive at the factory, they are full of moisture. This first stage reduces their water content to around 60% -70%. The tea leaves are in large tubs on a wire mesh. Air passes over the leaves, drying them gently. This takes between 12-17 hours.

#### **3. Rolling**

There are two methods to roll tea leaves.

##### **The orthodox (traditional) method**

A worker place the leaves on a rolling mill, which rotates horizontally on a moving table. This movement turns and turns the leaves to make them thin and robust. It also breaks them.

##### **The CTC method**

The name of the second way of rolling tea is the 'Cut, Tear and Curl'.

A worker puts the tea leaves through a series of rollers, covered by hundreds of small sharp teeth. These teeth cut, rip and curl the leaves, producing tiny granules perfect for tea bags.

#### **4. Oxidation (fermenting)**

Black tea, green tea, white tea and Oolong tea all start from the same leaves. So the duration of oxidation process determines different colors, tastes and strengths of tea. Firstly, they put the leaves on tables. Thus, they remain there from 30 minutes to two hours at a temperature of about 26° C.

## **5. Drying (cooking)**

Tea leaves pass through hot air dryers. This further reduces leaves water content to about 3%. When they go to the dryer, the leaves cook at a very high temperature of 130 degrees centigrade. They are ready in about 18 minutes.

## **6. Grading**

In the factory, they classify the processed leaves by size, type and appearance by mechanical sieves. Then they remove undesirable particles, such as pieces of tough stalk and fibre.

## **7. Trading**

Trading of tea takes place between producers and buyers through auctions, whereby tea companies, also known as packers and blenders, buy tea in large bags.

Auctions take place in producing countries. In this way they market more than 85% of tea produced worldwide.

## **8. Blending**

At this stage, tea processed by the small owners is mixed with tea of superior quality from large estates. The tea sold to the consumer is a blend of at least 20 and up to 40 different teas from a variety of properties and from more than one country. While the producing countries (Kenya, India, etc.) make the basic types of tea, the western countries make the blending and the packaging and care the distribution of the finished product.

Only seven multinational companies control the world tea market.

## **9. Distribution**

## **10. Packaging**