

# **Aromatica Fine Teas**

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**“The Benefit of Offering Artisan Teas”  
Import & Processing Standards**

November, 2008

## What Are You Drinking? November, 2008

Recently, one of our customers asked an important question: "How do you know the green tea you get from China is safe?" With the reports of melamine in milk, tainted baby formula, lead in exported toys, and other product warnings and recalls it is wise to be wary of China's commitment to manufacturing consumer-safe products. Since most people drink green tea for its health benefits, it is also wise to ask whether these benefits are being compromised by the use of pesticides and unhealthy production practices.

World consumption of tea equals all other manufactured drinks – including coffee, chocolate, soft drinks, and alcohol – combined. The only thing humans drink more of than tea is water.

**Currently, 24.6% of the world's tea production comes from China.** So, how do you know that what is in your cup is safe, free from pesticides and produced cleanly? By the way, not only green tea comes from China, but black, white and oolong as well.

I am so glad our customer raised the question. We have a story to tell that will make you glad you buy your tea from Aromatica. Note: the import standards described below apply to tea from all countries, not just China.

### General Terms:

1. **Tea:** white, green, oolong, or black tea all comes from the *Camellia Sinensis* plant. Any kind of tea that does not come from this plant is a tisane.
2. **Tisane:** All herbal tea. A tisane is an infusion made from leaves, flowers, stems or roots of any plant other than *Camellia Sinensis*.
3. **Plantations:** Most tea consumed outside East Asia is produced on large plantations in India or Sri Lanka, and is sold to large tea manufacturing businesses. Opposite these large-scale industrial plantations are many small artisan "garden" tea plantations that produce highly sought after gourmet teas. These are the teas Aromatica seeks. They tend to be smaller enterprises, produce higher quality product, and require more highly skilled workers and therefore pay better wages.
4. **World Production:** Tea is grown all over the world. These are the current major production percentages. India 27.4%, China 24.6%, Sri Lanka 9.8%, Kenya 9.4%, Indonesia 5.3%, Turkey 4.9%, Latin America 2.4%. 16.2% comes from miscellaneous small countries and producers in scattered regions.

### Source Ingredients

Aromatica's herbal and tea blends may be our own original or custom blends or they may be bought from a supplier whose product we do not feel we can improve upon. "Apeldoorn's" is an example of an Aromatica custom blend. It was developed especially for Apeldoorn's Fine Baking on Mill Street in Chilliwack, and there are only two places in the world you can get that tea: Apeldoorn's and Aromatica. Any of the gold bagged teas in our store are Aromatica original blends that you won't find anywhere else.

But whether the tea is blended by a supplier or Aromatica, what is the quality of the source ingredients? The black, white, green, and oolong tea; the herbals; the spices and dried fruits, and the essential flavouring oils come from all over the world. How do you know they are safe for consumption?

No quality control system is 100% bullet proof; every precaution has a margin of error. However, by sourcing from the tea industry's best Aromatica's products meet - quite literally - the highest standards of production and processing.

### **The Highest Standard**

Each of our three primary suppliers conforms to European Union standards for products imported. EU standards are the most stringent in the world. They result from a five step process resulting in "key requirements products must meet in order to be sold across the whole European Union." Their mandate is to "protect the health, safety, and environment of Europe's citizens."

European Union standards address a wide range of health and environmental factors. In July 2000, the EU released new pesticide standards on tea imports, expanding the number of prohibited pesticides from seven to one hundred thirty four. In 2001, China's tea exports to the EU dropped 37 percent through failure to meet the new standards.

Economic pressure has resulted in China developing stricter tea export supervision. In 2006 the Jiangsu Province Administration of Import and Export Inspection and Quarantine, through which 60 percent of China's tea export passes, rejected for export 1,202 tons of tea in 25 lots because it failed export chemical tests.

Effective July 29, 2008 an additional 170 pesticides were added to the list of banned chemicals, these were mainly new pesticides.

### **Manufacturing Standards after Import**

Pure product is great, but what about our supplier's standards once the imported product reaches their facilities? Each of our primary suppliers has achieved stringent certification attesting their commitment to safe product handling practices and their ability to meet those commitments.

#### **Supplier #1 holds certification in:**

- ◆HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points). This is a program designed to analyze the product cycle from the raw ingredient stage to the finished product. It is a rigorous two-year process to gain the initial certification and annual audits of all processes and documentation to retain it.
  
- ◆GMP (Good Manufacturing Practices). This certification addresses effective procedures ensuring employee hygiene, controlling non-employee traffic throughout the facility, chemical usage, identification of allergens, and related controls and procedures. This certification is audited annually.
  
- ◆NOP (National Organic Program). This certification qualifies the supplier to advertise as a USDA NOP Certified Organic Food Handler and governs guidelines which prevent the mixing of organic and non-organic products and prevents organic products from coming into contact with prohibited substances. Processes and documentation are audited annually and integrated with the HACCP and GMP programs.

#### **Supplier #2 has the following certification:**

- ◆IFS (International Food Standard) certification. This governs the processing, manufacture, and distribution of tea, herb, fruit and vegetable raw material for the food and pharmaceutical industry.
  
- ◆ISO certification in Quality Management System for ESC (Environmental and Quality Standards certification) for development, production and distribution of tea, herb, fruit and vegetable raw materials for the food and pharmaceutical industry.
  
- ◆NOP (National Organic Program) Master Certificate. This certification qualifies the supplier to advertise as a USDA NOP Certified Organic Food Handler and governs guidelines which prevent the mixing of organic and non-organic products and prevents organic products from coming into contact with prohibited substances.

Upon arrival at this supplier's facility, all teas and ingredients undergo testing in their own laboratories as well as in third party laboratories to maintain quality assurance and product purity.

**Supplier #3 has the following quality controls in place:**

- ◆ Tests its teas according to European Union standards for cleanliness from pesticide and herbicide residue, toxins and bacteria. If any significant quantities of impurities were in the plant's ground water and were subsequently absorbed by the plants, they would be detected during this leaf testing.
- ◆ Deals only with vendors who can document product testing.
- ◆ New vendors are required to provide documentation of testing procedures and results. Our supplier then conducts either internal or third party testing to verify the documented results.
- ◆ All products advertised as organic are certified either USDA Organic or EU Organic.

**And One Goes Beyond**

In addition to EU standards and manufacturing facility standards, one of our suppliers has his own 5-point random audit that he uses with growers he has been dealing with since 1992.

The audit points are:

1. Product is chemically analyzed for pesticides.
2. Worker's wage scale is audited.
3. Staff health is audited. This is a non-medical walk about observing the general health and hygiene of workers on the plantation.
4. Working conditions are inspected for safety and hygiene.
5. Reinvestment in the plantation is audited. If a tea grower is not reinvesting in his plantation, he is not committed long term. If he is reinvesting in the plantation, he is more likely to maintain proper production standards.

Our buyer has one other test that is brilliant. In a phone conversation, he told me, "I drink tea every day. I don't want pesticides and chemicals in my bloodstream anymore than you do." So, as he inspects the tea plantation, he pulls leaves from different areas of the fields and the drying sheds. When he gets back to the office, he and the plantation owner brew the leaves he has gathered, and then he and the owner sit at a table and drink the tea – together. Brilliant.

**Additional Sustainable Approaches**

Our buyers are also increasing development of teas grown in regions such as Kenya, which is arid and cultivates tea at high altitudes where pesticides are unnecessary.

Here at home, Aromatica is negotiating agreements with a local organic farm to supply organics for our herbal blends, beginning with the 2009 crop. This will not only provide an excellent local source for organic product, but ensures that the carbon footprint transporting the product to our store is minimized.

<p>The information contained in this report is, to the best of our knowledge, true and complete. This report is offered on an "as is" basis. The statements and facts recorded herein do not include guarantees on the part of Aromatica Fine Teas &amp; Soaps, nor do we accept any liability connected with the use of the information contained in this report.</p>
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