

It's RED TEA damn it

Most westerners still refer to their most common form of tea as “black tea”.

This is completely wrong.

When Europeans first started buying tea from China, they had very little idea what they were doing. So they described the different teas they bought by the color of the dried leaves. Green leaves were “green tea” and black leaves were “black tea”. Simple.

But still completely wrong.



[Formosa Jade Oolong](#) tea. Not actually green tea.

There is also [white tea](#) and [oolong tea](#), but if you look at their dried leaves, how would you describe them? Light green? Greenish-blackish? The Chinese have a much better

system - they name tea **for the color of the beverage made**. Not the dried leaves.



[English Breakfast](#) tea. Notice that it is not black.

So, the leaves that made a green-looking *drink* were **green tea**, or, since this is the most common form in the east, simply **tea**. The tea made most commonly in the west, the red-brown beverage made from the same tea leaves, but which have been fired or toasted, is **red tea**. Oolong, which was invented long after green tea, was considered “between” green and red, which it is from the chemist’s standpoint of oxidization.

For the record, there is such a thing as **black tea** in Chinese (actually it’s the second-most ancient form) - a noticeably thick, dark beverage, usually considered medicinal. This is **pu’erh**, or fermented tea, and *completely* different from English Breakfast or Earl Grey.



[Tuóchá \(沱茶\)](#). **This** is black tea. Notice anything?

I believe that the Chinese nomenclature for tea is correct and that's what I use. So whenever you see the words **red tea** in my writing, you know I mean the common Western-style tea, and when I use **black tea** I mean the very strong and unusual fermented tea that comes in little compressed cakes.

Seriously. Stop calling it "black tea". It's **red tea** damn it.