

mint tea

Mint tea is an integral part of Moroccan hospitality. A steaming glass of the fragrant, sweet, light tea is offered as a sign of welcome, and even the poorest Moroccans feel honor-bound to offer the drink to anyone who visits their homes. Mint tea may also be provided to ease delicate business negotiations. Tea arrived in Morocco in 1854 when, during the Crimean War, the blockade of the Baltic drove British merchants to seek new markets for their goods and they disposed of stocks of tea in Tangier and Essaouira. The mint should be spearmint, and traditionally the sugar is cut from a sugar loaf.

1 Rinse a teapot with boiling water. Add the tea and mint to the pot. Bring the water to a boil and immediately pour into the tea pot. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.

2 Pour the tea through a strainer into warmed glasses or small cups. Add sugar to taste (remember, in Morocco tea is supposed to be very sweet) and decorate each glass or cup with a lemon slice, if liked, and a sprig of mint.

Serves 4

Variation: Iced Mint Tea

Add the sugar to the pot with the tea and mint. After steeping, pour the tea through a strainer over cracked ice so it cools quickly. Serve in cold glasses with ice cubes, decorated in the same way.

2 teaspoons Chinese green tea

**4 tablespoons chopped mint,
preferably spearmint**

3½ cups water

sugar, to taste

To decorate:

4 lemon slices (optional)

4 small mint sprigs

saffron tea

This tea is a speciality of the southern Moroccan town of Taliouine, the saffron capital of Morocco. The surrounding hillsides are a glorious picture for a few days when the tidy rows of the special purple crocus are in flower.

1 Rinse a teapot with boiling water. Add the tea and saffron to the pot.

2 Bring the water to a boil and immediately pour into the tea pot. Leave to stand for 5 minutes.

3 Pour the tea through a strainer into warmed glasses or small cups. Add sugar to taste and decorate each glass or cup with a lemon slice, if liked, and a mint sprig.

Serves 4

2 teaspoons Chinese green tea

1 teaspoon saffron threads

3½ cups water

sugar, to taste

To decorate:

4 lemon slices (optional)

4 small mint sprigs