

TEA COUNTRIES

China still holds the foremost place as a tea-producing country. In 1908 the country produced 2,300,000,000 lbs of tea, which amounts to about two-thirds of the entire world crop, which amounts to four hundred and fifty million pounds annually.

In fact, though it is only because the soil received it graciously and the people of the country took up its cultivation that China and tea have become almost inseparably connected. In China the same methods are employed to-day as were in vogue a hundred years ago, and we may thank the Ceylon planters for the introduction of cleanliness in the preparation of tea.

When the baskets are filled they are brought to the withering lofts, great rooms fitted up with lattice-work shelves, in which the leaves are left for several hours in order that the moisture may be evaporated.

The rollers consist of two plane surfaces of wood whose action is similar to that of millstones, but the intervening space is large enough to prevent the grinding of the leaf.

The old method of firing and the one still used in China, is known as 'pan' or 'basket firing'. This is done by hand, the pans or baskets being held over fires by coolies, usually stripped to the waist. In Ceylon the firing is done by machinery, cleanliness being thus assured. Moreover, the tea, not being subjected to the direct fire, is less likely to lose any of its essential qualities.

stances which produce the most delicious tea, and there are regions south of the Yangtze where it is almost worth its weight in gold. The Ceylon tea is similar in taste to Indian tea, which was already popular when it first came into the market.

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