

It's real: A weight-loss tea that tastes of chocolate

Plymouth company markets tea that is like drinking liquid Toblerone but has no calories

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It sounds like the stuff that sweet dreams are made of – a Plymouth woman is to start selling a tea that tastes like chocolate and can even help you lose weight.

City-based Oolong Tea Company is promulgating a calorie-busting tea called Cocoa No.18 Dark Oolong Tea, that displays hints of chocolate honey. And company founder Eve Baker said: “As tea leaves and water have almost zero calories it should help to aid in weight loss.”



Daniel Lui shows Eve around his grandfathers Tea Garden.

Mrs Baker's quest for the perfect chocolate-flavoured brew led her on a long and arduous trek to the far east – and the vital intervention of a teeny insect.

Eve Baker, right, went all the way to the mountains of Taiwan to bring Cocoa Oolong tea back to Plymouth. “I had to travel 6,000 miles to the high mountains of Taiwan and meet with the local small land holders,” Mrs Baker said. “It was fascinating.”

The businesswoman returned to Plymouth with new flavours, ready to market, and is now launching the confectionery-nuanced Cocoa No.18, which will be debuted with a “free tasting session” at the Mount Edgcumbe County Park Christmas Fayre on Saturday and Sunday, December 9 and 10.

“Whilst it may not taste like a mug of hot chocolate, this rare Taiwanese tea does have a naturally sweet taste with hints of chocolate and honey,” Mrs Baker said. “It’s the tea equivalent of Toblerone.

“And more importantly, as it doesn’t have a tannic aftertaste you don’t need to add milk or sugar.” The tea acquires its distinctive taste thanks to the leaf hopper, a bug which nibbles at tea plants prior to harvesting. Mrs Baker said the insect’s saliva changes the enzymes of the leaf, which means that after processing it has a distinct honey and cocoa tone.



Peter Linn is one of Taiwans leading Oolong Tea experts.

She added: “I don’t actually agree with scientists that claim their tea has miraculous health benefits as everything is relative to one’s lifestyle and state of health. “But I do agree that cutting down on sugar is a good thing.”

The chocolate tea is actually the latest incarnation of a rare Taiwanese tea made famous by Queen Victoria, who named it Oriental Beauty due to the way its leaves unfurled and “danced” in her tea glass.

So Mrs Baker has also named her new tea Victoria. “This particular type of tea is very rare and difficult to acquire,” she said. “I had to get some – it wasn’t easy.” Mrs Baker explained how tea is the most popular drink in the world – half the Earth’s population are teetotal after all. This means authentic Taiwanese tea is much sought after by Japanese and Chinese enthusiasts, Mrs Baker said, which means prices can be “ridiculously high”.

“After a journey of several weeks I found three small holders that made great tasting oolong tea teas, including this one (Cocoa),” she said. “It tastes like a sweet black tea – as if milk and honey, and perhaps chocolate, have been added. “But they haven’t.”

She said the reason Taiwanese teas are so good is because they grow very slowly, high in the mountains, and the farmers have learned to “harness nature” and actively encourage wildlife in their gardens.

“Weeds are encouraged as these are more attractive to slugs and caterpillars than the prime tea leaves, which are almost identical to those found on most types of garden Camellias,” she said. “This negates the need for pesticides that would otherwise spoil the delicate taste, and polyphenols that makes oolong tea so special.”

Tea – the facts

All tea, green, black and oolong, originates from the same small tea shrub, known as the *Camellia Sinensis*. A combination of environment, and human intervention has led to the creation of distinct varieties of tea plants, known as cultivars. These differ in taste, structure and tolerance to specific conditions in the same way wine producers have created the shiraz, merlot and cabernet strain of grape vines.

So it’s quite possible to have one tea bush and to use some leaves to produce green tea, some leaves to produce oolong tea and some leaves to produce black tea.

The real difference between green, oolong and black teas is the processes the leaves go through following harvest. This relates to the level of decomposition leaves are able to undergo before being packed ready for consumption.

Green tea leaves are picked and quickly heated with steam, or in an oven, to stop fermentation. But those that want to obtain black tea allow leaves to oxidize or ferment completely before heating and drying them.

The Taiwanese have realised a range of flavours with associated health benefits can be obtained if the decomposition/oxidisation process is carefully controlled to create a special type of tea called Oolong tea. Oolong tea is therefore any tea that is partially fermented, to produces a range from a very light tea to an intense red tea, often referred to as red oolong, ruby red, red jade or black oolong tea.