

**WELLNESS**

# Three cheers to tea

**HEALTH** The Brooke Bond Tea Council is going all out to promote the fragrant leaf as a super-food

If you've been starting your day with a fragrant cup of perfectly-brewed tea, and feeling guilty about it, you're not alone. Many others feel that tea, which doctors and scientists equate to a super-food, is bad for health. They also believe it increases acidity, darkens the skin and promotes greying.

The myths against tea abound. And, while caffeine-rich coffee turned classier (think swish cafes perfect for the young to meet up and bond over steaming cups of espresso, latte and the like) and adopted an avatar that made it more acceptable, even fashionable, to successive generations, tea stayed where it was.

So did the perception that it was a poor man's drink. There are tea bars, yes, but they are a niche segment — nowhere as popular as



**HEALTH IN A CUP** Tea offers innumerable benefits

those devoted to coffee. Trying to change all that is the Brooke Bond Tea Council, made up of experts from the fields of nutrition science, and tea research and plantation.

As a first step, it commissioned a study by ACNielsen (sample size: 1123 across 12 cities) to understand the consumer perception of the beverage. The results were quite a shocker. Though tea was the most

popular drink (81 per cent of the respondents consumed it every day), 77 per cent believed tea was unhealthy (a rating even lower than sports energy drinks or soups!). The younger generation was moving away from it (61 per cent believed it was a traditional drink meant for the old), and though green tea and iced tea were fancied the world over, awareness about it was quite low in

India (half the respondents had no idea about these categories). And, considering the profile of the council, you were more than willing to listen to what some of the members said — nutritionist Ishi Khosla; consultant nutritionist and dietician Dharini Krishnan; United Plantation Association of South India (UP-ASI) Advisor, N. Muraleedharan; Scientist, Hindustan Unilever Research Centre (HURC), Gautam Banerjee; and category head, (Beverages), HUL, Arun Srinivas. If Gautam chose to talk about the goodness of the flavonoids in tea, and how they promote vascular and dental health, besides providing relaxation even while stimulating (thanks to the presence of theanine), Ishi spoke about how tea was good for kids too. In fact, "because of its effect on oral health", it is perfectly okay to give kids tea, she said.

And no, tea is not addictive, said Muraleedharan, for it has far lower quantities of caffeine than coffee. And, Dharini said it was all right to have anywhere from three to eight cups of tea a day, provided tea was not taken to replace a meal.

So, what are you waiting for? Go grab your cup of goodness.

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