

## British Culture of Tea

Everyone who has at least once visited England or read about this nation should notice how important for their culture is a Cup of Tea. But why tea is so significant to British people and how it all is suited in the complicated social culture of England? This essay, based on the research on Kate Fox - British social anthropologist, presents how the culture of tea, on one hand, combine and on the other hand divide the social classes of England.

To start with is important to figure out how the British culture of tea begun. First of all, England doesn't have its own black tea so they need to transport tea from the old colonial places like India (Assam), Sri Lanka, or East Africa. The culture of tea in Britain was originally taken from Asia. The British taking the basic from the tea drinking culture of Asia adapted it to their need, adding milk, which changes the bitterest of original black tea, making this beverage softer to their taste. But the level of milk added to tea may revile to which social group English people belong. The strong black tea is a feature of a lower-class and the whiter tea becomes, the higher is a person going on the social ladder.

Another important aspect of tea culture is connected with adding sugar to the British tea. Kate Fox explains it in this way "Taking sugar in your tea is regarded by many as an infallible lower-class indicator: even one spoonful is a bit suspect (unless you were born before about 1955); more than one and you are lower-middle at best; more than two and you are definitely working class" (Fox; 450). Fox points out how small details expose people to which social class people belong. British culture is fascinating and the difference between the social classes is very important for the citizens of England, visible in their everyday life.

Talking about the British culture of tea, it is significant to picture the types of tea drinking time traditions. Tea time for the British is almost all the time, but there are few times of the day when drinking tea is the only way to go through the day. The first tea British people drink during their breakfast, the second tea time is called an elevenses - a tea during the lunch break. Afternoon tea or low tea is a name for the light meal like sandwiches and sweets typically eaten at 4:00 pm accompanied by hot tea. High tea is a term which refers to the evening meal and typically includes food like meat, bread, vegetables, and hot tea and is eaten between 5:00 - 6:00 pm. The type of tea traditions is related to the social class. Historically, high tea was a necessary meal for the working class while afternoon tea was a social event for the upper class. Despite the traditional moments of a day when drinking tea is necessary, British people find in drinking tea a solution to the world's problems and a cure for nearly all indispositions, from a headache to a scraped arm. Tea is also very important as a remedy for a social and psychological element. Kate Fox writes in her book *Watching the English*, that, "Tea is still believed by English people of all classes, to have miraculous properties" (Fox; 450)

To sum up, all of the above traditions and habits make British nation so fascinating not also by dividing people for their ways of making and drinking tea but also combining them in love for a black tea. This culture of tea still has its old-fashioned charm which makes every ordinary day, an extraordinary occasion for a cup of tea.

Reference: Kate Fox, 2014, *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour*, Nicholas Brealey: 2 edition.