

# The World in a Tea Cup

*The global tea renaissance is in full bloom—just don't call it the new coffee. Bruce Richardson, co-author of The New Tea Companion: A Guide to Teas Throughout the World, explains the desire for and pursuit of *Camellia sinensis*.*

• **MEDITATION IN A CUP** The small rituals of preparing and enjoying tea soothe and slow us down; it's the antithesis of grabbing a grande cappuccino on the go. Tea is also a welcoming gesture across cultures. "Wherever you travel, people will put a cup of tea in your hand." • **THE BASICS** American consumers used to be happy with a simple tea bag, but now they want loose, gourmet tea, from delicate white teas from China's Fujian province to rich blends of black tea from Kenya. Water temperature, brewing times, teapots, and ceremonial presentation vary. • **URBAN TEA ROOMS** There's a tearoom to suit every taste. Devotees can search and read user-submitted reviews on sites such as [www.teaguide.net](http://www.teaguide.net). In London, tea at the Wolseley in Piccadilly is less expensive and more informal than some competitors. Ladurée in Paris is "tea and macaroon heaven." Teance in Berkeley, Calif., offers tastings, and owner Winnie Yu shares her expertise in Far East teas. • **PLANTATION IMMERSION** Intrepid connoisseurs can develop their palates while relaxing in picturesque plantations. India's Darjeeling region produces the champagne of teas. Already a top tea export-

ing country, Sri Lanka is poised to become the new tea tourism hotspot now that its protracted civil war is over. To sample estate life closer to home, tour the Charleston Tea Plantation in South Carolina, the only commercially operated tea plantation in the continental U.S.

—LINDA BURBANK

