



Cup that heals?

As far back as 500,000 years ago, people enjoyed steeping tea leaves in boiling water. Was it the soothing experience that turned people onto tea? Or did our ancestors understand the powerful healing properties of a warm cup of tea? Whatever the reason, the art of drinking tea has become a worldwide phenomenon.

Recent media attention has turned the public's preference for green tea, an ancient Asian blend, that has become massively popular in the Western world. There are a number of outlandish claims regarding the health benefits of green tea being thrown around.

So, what are the health benefits of green tea?

What's inside?

To understand the health benefits of green tea, let's first take a look at what's inside each cup:

- Green tea is chock-full of polyphenols, phytochemicals with potent antioxidant properties that give green tea its bitter flavour.
- Green tea contains six primary polyphenols, known as catechins.
- Green tea contains more catechins than black or oolong tea.
- Epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) is the most active and studied of green tea's catechins.
- Green tea also contains alkaloids such as caffeine (although in lower quantities than black tea), which give green tea its stimulating properties.

Is green tea healthy?

If only life were cut-and-dry, this question would have a simple answer. However, as with many natural supplements or remedies, the verdict on green tea is still up in the air. While some studies have suggested that green tea offers health benefits, many institutions, including the National Institutes of Health, agree that there simply isn't enough evidence to definitively proclaim the health benefits of green tea. Keeping in mind that more study is needed, green tea has shown modest benefits for some major health conditions:

★ Cardiovascular Disease:

Several large studies have suggested that drinking green tea reduces the risk of stroke and coronary artery disease, although results are mixed. Green tea may further lower cholesterol, but it seems to have no effect on blood pressure.

★ Cancer:

Human studies of green tea in cancer prevention have been conflicting. However, animal studies have been much more convincing. Green tea catechin extracts are, thus being investigated for their anticancer properties in current clinical trials.

How much green tea should I drink?

Now that you understand that drinking green tea may offer some health benefits, why not give it a shot? But how many cups a day should you drink? Well, brace yourself: The majority of studies that found any health benefit had participants drink anywhere from three to 10 cups of green tea daily. In other words – get brewin'!

How should I prepare my tea?

You'll get most benefit out of freshly brewed hot tea that has steeped for three to five minutes, a process that helps to bring out the catechins. Green tea made from older leaves also tends to have more catechins. Decaffeinated or bottled tea preparations and instant teas have less of those favourable chemicals and compounds, whereas green tea extract capsules provide similar amounts of catechins to freshly brewed tea. Typically, you'll want to take in 250 mg to 400 mg of green tea polyphenols per day or more (equals about three cups per day).

Does adding milk affect my tea?

Though green tea is not normally prepared with milk, one study found that the addition of milk blocked the healthy action of green or black tea catechins. Several other studies, however, have refuted this claim.

Is green tea harmful?

Green tea does contain active ingredients, particularly caffeine, which can cause problems such as an increased heart rate or insomnia for some. Caffeine also crosses the placenta, and is found in breast milk, which means that pregnant or breastfeeding women might want to avoid green tea.

Green tea also contains tannin, which may limit iron absorption from fruits or vegetables. Taking tea with some lemon (high in vitamin C) should counteract this.

There are also numerous drugs with which green tea should not be combined. Many of these drug interactions are due to green tea's caffeine content. Green tea should not be mixed with adenosine, beta-lactam antibiotics, aspirin, benzodiazepines, beta-blockers, blood-thinning medications, chemotherapy, clozapine, ephedrine, lithium, monoamine oxidase inhibitors, oral contraceptives, and phenylpropanolamine. For more interactions, speak to your doctor.

Going green

Despite the common notion that green tea is a holistic and healthy beverage, current medical studies don't yet seem to agree. While results look promising, more time and effort is needed to fully unravel the mysteries of this ancient beverage. In the meantime, drinking a few cups of green tea a day in place of other less healthy beverage choices is not such a bad idea.



A great lot of people regrettably, take New Year's Eve as a chance to get royally plastered. Which is about the worst way to greet the new year really, because you have to meet something coming head on with a clear, not foggy, mind and your senses all alert. And the first day certainly deserves more than your miserable hangover. When I was this prim and proper schoolgirl in the convent run by the nuns, one thing made a powerful impact on me. When you are young, raw and painfully naive, I suppose just about anything makes an impact on you. But I've simply got to share this with you. Every year, the nuns, not all of them together (or the school would disintegrate into anarchy), would disappear from sight. They, we were mysteriously told, were having a retreat. For some time, I am ashamed to say I thought it meant a luxurious vacation at a retreat, probably a Goan heritage hotel, where they sipped pina coloda and soaked in the sun. Later, I learnt they actually became recluses, and spent the time in silence, contemplation and prayer. For me, it seemed a novel thing to do and still does. Now, wearied by twenty-four hour television, with their coverage of despicable men like the molester Rathore and the antics of Rakhi Sawant, the incessant chatter of FM channels with their false cheer and exaggerated accents, the deluge of spam on my gmail account, I, too, wish to retreat from this cacophonous, hyperactive world to a silence so perfect, you can hear a leaf falling. For us women, it is most essential to get away to someplace else where nobody can see us. It would be a win win situation for sure. You won't have to colour or perm or straighten your hair. You won't have to bother about fashion fiascos, and can combine your track pants with a feather boa without anybody being the wiser for it. You won't have to eat out your heart out watching the hour glass figures of other females around you, because there, in that isle of silence, there are no humans in sight of any shape or size. In that magic place, you can actually believe you are God's gift to man. The audacity of hope... though I doubt Barack Obama was referring to this. Was he?

Even otherwise, I believe withdrawing into a retreat is a wonderfully detoxifying thing to do. Just switch off your mobiles, shut down your computers, cancel all meetings and appointments, and get ready to open your inward eye, that eye which shut tight because you were barking orders on the phone, or twittering inanely, or being cowed by a pushy salesman into buying yet another gizmo you don't need. Just get to know the real you inside yourself. Listen to the self remembering the past, complaining of old hurts, articulating brave new hopes. Give that self the importance it deserves. Because that self is the genuine part of you, that natural part of you that doesn't really care about your sharp suits and swanky car and cool duplex apartment in the poshest part of town. It only wants you to figure out what's important in life, how far you have come, the people you love and are loved in return. It reminds you of your lost

childhood, with its evocative smells and remembered faces; your lost youth with its fist bunched bravura wild bike escapades, carteen politics and fevered romance. It helps to cope with the middle-aged self, with its tell-tale crow's feet, sagging body, defiant children and crippling mortgage. And the best time to go into this retreat, this voyage of self-discovery, is close to the new year, for this is the time you must do an inventory, so that you don't drag the excess baggage of one year to the next, so that you start with a clean slate, a *tabula rasa*, so to speak. If more people did this, I think we would have fewer cred-

Shetty's celebrity wedding, others would say the election of Barack Obama, the Copenhagen summit, and the presence of ULFA leaders back home were the high points. This columnist consciously avoids all references to Bollywood, but makes an exception in this case. Years ago, in 1988, in the runaway hit *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak*, Aamir Khan strummed his way into millions of hearts with the song that spoke of Daddy's hopes that his son would achieve greatness one day. This year, with Aamir Khan astonishingly playing a college kid yet again, there is a sea change. It is not about living upto your Daddy's dream any-

3rd eye

Indrani Raimedhi

Gazing inward



ulous fools rushing off to godmen to handle their woes. We would not have sham astrologers merrily divesting us of our money with fancy gemstones.

How you look back on the past year also tells a lot about the kind of person you are. While someone would remember 2009 for the bandobast of Shilpa

more. Instead, you are speaking out about how Daddy taught you about bribery. You want out. The straitjacket of parental pressure, insurmountable academic goals robs you of your childhood and youth. You want sunshine, you want rain, you want to grow up once again. The disillusionment of today's youth permeates every frame of this car-

did film. For Bollywood, always eager to create technicolour escapist illusions, this is certainly an achievement in 2009.

This is the time of the year when journoos go to town with a whole lot of lists. Lists about the ten most important political events of the year, the ten most discussed books or films, the ten most powerful men and women... you get the drift. I am a journo, too, but I'm afraid I'm no good at making lists, except the one listing the many times my better half let me down (I've run out of paper). Anyway, I am thankful I don't have to bother making a list, because the category I'm about to mention doesn't need other names at all. So, the person you felt most sorry for in 2009 is... no prizes for guessing... Tiger Woods.

I mean, what was he thinking? Here he was, with this perfect career, a perfect family, luxurious homes, generous endorsements, a squeaky clean public image and then whoosh! It came down like a house of cards. How do we know if the outraged wife was actually going after him with a golf club, instead of dutifully extricating him from the car? Soon, all his indiscretions were crawling out of the woodwork – fourteen at the last court, and the paparazzi are like little boys in a candy shop. Most of these women, a good lot of them blonde – are fun time gals, who are both easy on the eye and the morals. Elin is, of course, going to take him to the cleaners, her hiring up a hardnosed celebrity divorce lawyer is an ominous sign of things to come. Woods may even lose custody of his kids, not to speak of paying millions in alimony. Accenture and other brands have distanced themselves from him, and his career is on indefinite hold. Woods must be gnurly pondering over the year 2009 as the one that did him in. I think this is enough for any man to be put off by women forever. But I wish to end on a more cheery note. Though Tiger won't read this (he'll be too busy poring over the fine print in the divorce papers), I just want to say that all these years I haven't paid him much attention. Okay, so he was this amazingly successful golfer with a haircut as neat as the golf course he played on. But that was about it. He was too perfect, too goody goody. He made you feel inferior somehow, as if you didn't give your best shot and he did, literally. Now that his smarmy private life is spread out across the tabloids, he somehow seems more human, simply because he is fallible, and in obvious misery. You feel sorry about the bloke and relieved that you won't be in his hind of mess, at least not on the same scale anyway. There is a lesson in that somewhere, a modern day morality tale, but no one cares much about it as they pick on the more delectable bits.

This then, is the first piece of the year. Like always, it has been an attempt to catch the fleeting moments with no other aim than to amuse and nudge you into a train of thought. Like all of you, I look back on last year with mixed feelings. Some things could have changed. Some should not have. I was no wiser than I was the previous year. But hey, who wants to grow up?

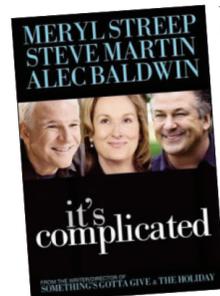
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It's Complicated

Cast: Meryl Streep, Alec Baldwin, Steve Martin.
Director: Nancy Meyers

Jane (Streep) is the mother of three grown kids, owns a thriving Santa Barbara bakery/restaurant and has—after a decade of divorce—an amicable relationship with her ex-husband, attorney Jake (Baldwin). But when Jane and Jake find themselves out of town for their son's college graduation, things start to get complicated. An innocent meal together turns into the unimaginable—an affair. With Jake remarried to the much younger Agnes (Lake Bell), Jane is now, of all things, the other woman.

Caught in the middle of their renewed romance is Adam (Martin), an architect hired to remodel Jane's kitchen. Healing from a divorce of his own, Adam starts to fall for Jane, but soon realises he's become part of a love triangle. Should Jane and Jake move on with their lives, or is love truly lovelier the second time around? It's...complicated.



MOVIE WATCH
Vikram Barkataki

TOP 10 Hollywood

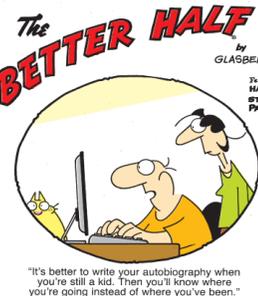
- Avatar
- Sherlock Holmes
- Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel
- It's Complicated
- Up in the Air
- The Blind Side
- The Princess and the Frog
- Nine
- Invictus

Avatar

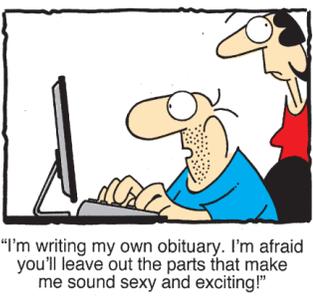
Cast: Sam Worthington, Zoe Saldana, Stephen Lang.
Director: James Cameron

Avatar is the story of an ex-Marine who finds himself thrust into hostilities on an alien planet filled with exotic life forms. As an Avatar, a human mind in an alien body, he

finds himself torn between two worlds, in a desperate fight for his own survival and that of the indigenous people. More than ten years in the making, Avatar marks Cameron's return to feature directing since helming 1997's Titanic, the highest grossing film of all time and winner of eleven Oscars including Best Picture. WETA Digital, renowned for its work in The Lord of the Rings Trilogy and King Kong, has incorporated new intuitive CGI technologies to transform the environments and characters into photorealistic 3D imagery that will transport the audience into the alien world rich with imaginative vistas, creatures and characters.



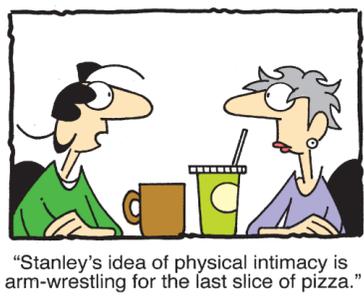
"I spent 20 minutes with my doctor and he couldn't find anything wrong with me. Why can't you do that?"



"I'm writing my own obituary. I'm afraid you'll leave out the parts that make me sound sexy and exciting!"



"I am acting my age! People my age act like they're afraid of getting old!"



"Stanley's idea of physical intimacy is arm-wrestling for the last slice of pizza."

FORECAST

- JANUARY 4 - 10**
- ARIES (MAR 21-APR 19)**
Consider scheduling some physical activity for Monday. You're going to be inundated by details, and an outlet for all that mental frustration could make the day pass more easily. On Tuesday and Wednesday, you need to overcome your usual competitiveness, if you want to get ahead. On Saturday and Sunday, seek out adventure!
 - TAURUS (APR 20-MAY 20)**
Monday should bring you nothing but fun and flirtation. The excitement continues into midweek, although probably of a more mundane variety. Your usual work or home routine gets reshuffled by the introduction of something welcome and new. Indulge yourself, but don't overdo it. On Saturday and Sunday, things aren't what they seem.
 - GEMINI (MAY 21-JUN 21)**
On Monday, you'll have to work extra hard to make yourself clear (especially with family members and others close to you). Midweek, you'll get your silver tongue back – and others will line up just to get in on all the fun you're having. Don't be afraid to start something, even if you have no intention of following through. On Saturday and Sunday, you can guarantee a good time with some good old-fashioned teamwork.
 - CANCER (JUN 22-JUL 22)**
You're stealing the spotlight on Monday. Don't think others don't notice – and admire – your better qualities. On Tuesday and Wednesday, you might find friction on the home front. You can still forge ahead on new projects, but try to listen to others to soothe ruffled feelings. This weekend, do something for yourself, and don't feel like you need to apologise.

- LEO (JUL 23-AUG 22)**
As you start the week, expect some unusual introversion on your part. Use Monday to take time out and reassess the big picture. On Tuesday and Wednesday, your confidence and charisma will have everyone falling all over themselves to agree with you – and just to be with you! This weekend, turn up the volume!
- VIRGO (AUG 23-SEPT 22)**
You just couldn't ask for a better Monday. The week begins with you at your super-organised, over-achieving best. Follow that energy into Tuesday and Wednesday, with impulsiveness and unusually (for you) spontaneous decisions. This weekend, try to go with the flow, even if that means letting some of your responsibilities slip.
- LIBRA (SEPT 23-OCT 22)**
Monday could present extraordinary opportunities for communication. You can learn a lot (and have a lot of fun) just talking to people, both friends and friends-to-be. Just make sure you listen as much as you speak. On Tuesday and Wednesday, all eyes are on you, and people can't get enough of your confidence and charm. This weekend, expect to explore. You'll cover new ground and share new ideas.
- SCORPIO (OCT 23-NOV 21)**
It's all about the details on Monday. Provided you can navigate the many events and plans, you'll have a great day (and you might even learn a juicy secret or two). Midweek, you'll be less interested in hanging out with friends, but you can put that unusual introversion to good use. Later this weekend, forget yourself and get caught up in the moment.

- SAGITTARIUS (NOV 22-DEC 21)**
Monday could be a struggle, but take a deep breath and relax, because your week will get much better. On Tuesday and Wednesday, you'll be universally loved – not just by friends, but by everyone you meet. This weekend, you'll switch back to good old gregariousness, and you'll have the most fun in big groups.
- CAPRICORN (DEC 22-JAN 19)**
Focus on your ambition this Monday. Map out big plans and take on daring ideas. Tuesday and Wednesday are perfect days for starting new projects and tackling new challenges. This weekend, don't get hung up on the particulars.
- AQUARIUS (JAN 20-FEB 18)**
Exercise extreme caution on Monday! You need to make sure you know what (and whom) you're dealing with, especially in anything involving money or business. Look under the surface to have the facts. On Tuesday and Wednesday, try something new. This weekend, you'll find the most fun in big groups.
- PISCES (FEB 19-MARCH 20)**
On Monday, don't be afraid to act, even if you don't have all the answers. Midweek, look for problems in a partnership. You can cut down on conflicts by settling debts and past issues. Out with the old, in with the new! This weekend, trust in your own absurdly good luck.