



# SPA PLEASURES™

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## GREEN TEA: Beyond Beautiful Brews

BY: DENISE REYNOLDS

Nearly five thousand years have passed since the first cup of green tea was brewed. According to legend, Chinese Emperor Shen Nung, known as the "Divine Healer," became aware that his subjects who boiled their water before drinking it seemed to possess increased longevity and improved health. One afternoon, as he knelt before his boiling water, some leaves from a nearby tree blew into the pot. Intrigued by its delightful aroma, the Emperor proceeded to sip the brew, and felt himself overwhelmed with a sense of well being. Tea was born.

Green tea comes from the *Camellia sinensis* tree. Bearing a resemblance to evergreens, these trees have dark green leaves and white flowers and can grow to heights of thirty feet. Unlike black tea, green tea is not fermented, which allows it to retain all of its intrinsic active ingredients. Today, green tea is credited with an impressive roster of health and beauty benefits. Research shows that green tea guards against cardiovascular disease and may protect us against developing cancer.

Recent scientific studies infuse ancient medicinal claims for the health-giving properties of green tea with an impressive amount of evidence. Rich in polyphenols—powerful antioxidants said to destroy free radicals, slow aging, and boost the immune system—green tea treatments are gaining steam as a beauty elixir of choice.

Tapping into the healing properties of green tea, the Spa at Squaw Creek in Lake Tahoe offers a Green Tea Foot Treatment that transforms the humble pedicure into a mountaintop experience. Seated in a luxuriously padded chair, facing a wall of windows overlooking majestic snow-capped mountains dotted with regal pines and shimmering aspen trees, I am mesmerized by hummingbirds hovering above a birdfeeder just a few feet away. My therapist hands me a remote control that allows me to select from a variety of massage chair movements while she treats my tootsies to a foot soak complete with whirlpool jets. One at a time, she massages my feet with a house blend of Dead Sea salt scrub and

massage oil enhanced with green tea leaves and sage.

With toenails neatly trimmed and cuticles coaxed back into their proper position, my feet are wrapped with hot towels and my lower legs are then blanketed with warm dry towels, which are draped over the whirlpool tub. After ten minutes of steaming, the towels are removed and a green tea gel is massaged into my feet and legs. An application of a light lotion permeated with green tea completes this magnificent treatment.

A short while later, I have the chance to experience yet another green tea spa treatment, this one at the Stillwater Spa—secluded away on a private island with panoramic views of Newport Harbor and Narragansett Bay—in Newport, Rhode Island. I select the Green Tea Body Wrap from the spa's menu. Moments later, I am shown to a wet treatment room where my therapist asks me to recline on a table while she briskly strokes my body with a natural sisal-bristled brush to stimulate my circulatory and lymphatic systems.

While I rest comfortably beneath a heat lamp, a soothing salve containing green tea leaves is smoothed over my body. Next, my body is encased in a Mylar sheet, buffered between layers of soft towels. Relaxed by their warmth, I smile as my therapist places a chilled flaxseed pillow over my eyes. A green tea oil massage follows, first for my feet and then for my scalp. Twenty minutes later I am released from my cocoon and rinsed off with a quartet of overhead Vichy showerheads and a sea sponge. Gently patting my body dry with soft towels, my therapist then applies a green tea lotion as the finishing touch.

Basking in the warm afterglow of my green tea treatment, I find myself pondering the wisdom of an ancient Chinese proverb: Drinking a daily cup of tea will surely starve the apothecary.

*Spa specialist Denise Reynolds, whose column "Spa Pleasures" brings you reports on spa treatments from around the world, invites you to visit [www.spapleasures.com](http://www.spapleasures.com) for more information on the pleasures that await you at today's spas. Copyright © 2005*