

Editor's note: The value of tea has continued to gain global recognition as the United Nations inaugurated International Tea Day on May 21. In a letter expressing congratulations on activities marking the day, President Xi Jinping says that, as a major producer and consumer of tea, China will work to promote a steady and healthy development of the global tea industry and to deepen cultural exchanges involving tea. China Daily reporters retrace the long history of Chinese tea culture to discover how this ancient beverage has gained new life and still plays a vital role in today's world.

Brewing civilization

Imagine the average day of a caffeine addict in a coffee culture like Italy or the United States. It may be a pot of java drained by family or co-workers in the morning to get the day going; a to-go espresso as an afternoon pick-me-up; and, if time allows, perhaps a sit-down cuppa during a coffee date with a friend.

Coffee's aroma, flavor and preparation endow it with an undeniable gastronomic appeal. But, ultimately, the drink is a ritual refuel to counteract fatigue and get through the day.

However, for millions of people in countries like China, the United Kingdom, India, Japan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, tea is a source of relaxation, spirituality, tradition and pleasure.

It isn't merely a drink. It's very much a way of life.

Across the world, at any given moment, millions of people are enjoying the beverage for various reasons.

China is the perfect place to begin an in-depth examination of tea's place in global society. The country's diverse climates produce hundreds of varieties. Nearly every province has its own distinctive type of tea, such as West Lake Longjing, Suzhou Biluochun and Huangshan Maofeng.

In the Cantonese culture in southern China, people often greet one another by saying *oh yum cha*, which means, "Let's go drink tea."

Tea is used for social reasons because it invokes so many cultural connotations.

Tea can involve a great deal of etiquette, tradition and serenity.

In November, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution that designates May 21 as International Tea Day.

The resolution suggests observing the day through education and activities to raise public awareness of the importance of tea for rural development and sustainable livelihoods.

Some say a shared love of tea could help people of all nations work together to build a better world.

In a letter expressing congratulations on a series of activities marking the day, President Xi Jinping said on May 21 that, as a major producer and consumer of tea, China will work to promote a steady and healthy development of the global tea industry and to deepen cultural exchanges involving tea and allow more people to enjoy lives accompanied by tea.

Saying that tea originated in China and became popular around the world, Xi added that the UN's decision shows the global community's recognition of, and emphasis on, the value of tea and that the move is significant for revitalizing the tea industry and carrying forward tea culture.

Tea is the second most consumed drink in the world, after water and before coffee. It's produced in more than 60 countries and regions, and is enjoyed by over 2 billion people, Xinhua

Tea is more than a drink. It's a significant component of shared cultures and individual lifestyles, and the ancient beverage is playing an even greater role in the world today, **Ma Zhenhuan reports in Hangzhou.**

News Agency reports.

"The letter sent by President Xi is a real inspiration for us, and I am now more confident in a bright future for Chinese tea," says Jin Weiqiang, a farmer who has grown Longjing tea, a celebrated green variety, in Meijiawu village in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, for 25 years.

As Chinese tea gains even greater international recognition, Jin expects there will be more platforms and activities for Chinese growers to expand in domestic and foreign markets, and more government policies will support the industry.

Wei Yuede, a merchant selling Anxi Tieguanyin, a renowned tea that originated in Anxi county, Fujian province, says the International Tea Day will increase growers' incomes by attracting more clients and lead to the production of higher-quality tea.

Wei's family has made their living from tea for generations. His forefathers even sold tea along the ancient Silk Road. The 56-year-old has been involved in the industry for over four decades.

The International Tea Day will encourage farmers to study tea consumption more closely to appeal to more young people, who often choose carbonated beverages, he says.

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Cultivating prosperity infused with dedication

By **MA ZHENHUAN** in Hangzhou and **CHENG YUEZHU** in Beijing

An elegant tea bag caught people's attention as Xu Ping, a deputy from Qingchuan county, Sichuan province, shared a story of how this small item made such a great difference to her hometown with other participants at the third session of the 13th National People's Congress in Beijing in May.

The bag, in white cloth with an embroidered pattern of two green tea leaves, contained Baiye Yihao, or White Leaf No 1, a white tea. Saplings were donated by farmers in Anji county in Huzhou of Zhejiang province to Qingchuan.

In April 2018, 20 farmers in Huangdu village in Anji — all members of the Communist Party of China — wrote a letter to President Xi Jinping, recounting their initiative in donating 15 million tea saplings to help people in poor areas.

"When drinking the water of a well, one should never forget those who dug it. After becoming rich, we have never forgotten the kindness and love of the Party," the farmers wrote in the letter.

It's of great significance that those who have already become well-off help those who are still living in poverty, Xi said in response to the letter in July that year, praising the farmers for their donations.

Later that year, a total of 34 villages in Hunan, Sichuan and Guizhou provinces were designated to receive the donated tea saplings.

Qingchuan received a total of 5.4 million tea saplings from Anji, and in March this year, the first batch of Baiye Yihao tea was picked.

It is expected that these donated saplings will help 633 households of farmers in Qingchuan to be lifted out of poverty by 2022, Xu says.

In Southwest China's Guizhou province, the donated tea saplings have also played a vital role in helping the



The saplings donated by farmers in Anji, Zhejiang province, bring hope to ethnic groups living in impoverished Pu'an county, Guizhou province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

poverty-stricken population to shrug off their impoverishment.

Zhang Yong, the head of Zhiqiang village, was particularly excited when the saplings arrived at Zhongzhai township, Yanhe Tujia autonomous county of Tongren in Guizhou, on Oct 20, 2018.

Just two hours after their arrival, Zhang, along with a representative from Anji, planted the first one at 6 am in the drizzle.

"Tea is a product that can generate revenue in the long term. If developed well, it will substantially increase the villagers' income," Zhang says.

This is not the first time that Zhang started growing tea in the village, but due to the lack of funding, the previous attempts did not yield satisfactory results.

"Because the natural environment of our village is suitable for growing tea, the village has a long tradition of making tea and we still have a few tea trees left."

In 2017, a dozen farmers from the village established a professional cooperative for tea planting, with each per-

son investing 5,000 yuan (\$715).

"Because we didn't have the knowledge and technology, we simply processed our tea leaves and sold them to surrounding villages. It wasn't really a proper business. Only when our village was selected as the location for growing Anji white tea, did we adopt a systematic approach to developing our tea industry," Zhang says.

In August 2018, Zhang and some other officials from Yanhe went on a one-week field trip to investigate the local white tea industry in Anji.

When he came back, the village started cultivating the barren mountains for farming. Zhang says because of the villagers' enthusiasm, they cultivated 33 hectares of land in a month.

For the first batch, Huangdu village in Anji donated 3.6 million saplings. And just 20 days after the saplings arrived, the three villages of Zhiqiang, Dazhai and Sanhuixi in Yanhe finished planting them.

These saplings covered 80 hectares of land in the three villages. More than 1,500 people from 381 impoverished households participated in the plantations' maintenance, including weeding, plowing and fertilizing, getting paid over 2.5 million yuan in total.

Tian Hongjun is one of the first farmers engaged in the tea planting in Dazhai village. Together with three other fellow villagers, he launched a cooperative, contracting and planting the tea saplings in Dazhai in 2018.

Tian used to work in a brick factory in Jiangxi province, 700 kilometers from his hometown.

"It was hard. My wife stayed at home to take care of our children and our 2.7 hectares of land went to waste without farming," the 38-year-old recalls.

"Now farmers in the village, aside from looking after their own farmlands, can work at the tea-planting cooperative with a daily income of 80 yuan," Tian says proudly.

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