

Tea Appreciation — Workbook

This workbook transforms the course concepts into hands-on practice: structured exercises, reference worksheets, and checklists guide you from your first comparative tasting to building a curated personal collection. Complete each section alongside its corresponding module, and return to earlier sections as your palate develops. The final action plan and templates are designed for repeated use over months, not just the duration of the course.

The Six Tea Categories

Anchor your understanding of each category through direct sensory comparison and a processing-method reference worksheet.

Exercise: Side-by-Side Category Identification

Source one representative tea from at least three of the six categories (white, green, oolong, black, pu-erh — yellow if available). Brew each at the correct temperature and ratio simultaneously. Before tasting, examine dry leaf and liquor colour. Taste in order from lightest to darkest. Use the prompts below to record your observations.

- Describe the dry leaf colour, shape, and any aroma you detect before water is added — for each tea you are comparing.

- After brewing, note liquor colour from pale straw through amber to dark red/brown — does it match your expectation for the category?

- On first sip, identify the dominant flavour family (floral, vegetal, nutty, earthy, sweet, spicy). Does the category's processing method explain that flavour?

- Which tea surprised you most? What did you expect versus what you actually tasted?

Worksheet: Processing Method Reference Sheet

Fill in each cell from memory after studying the module, then check against the course content. Completing this from recall is more effective than copying — leave cells blank if unsure, then revisit.

Category name

Oxidation % range

Kill-green method (pan-fire / steam / none)

Unique processing step (if any)

Primary flavour families

Ideal brew temperature (°C)

Benchmark example tea and origin

Checklist: Category Mastery Checklist

- I can name all six tea categories from memory and state their oxidation range
- I can distinguish white from green by liquor colour and aroma without reading the label
- I can explain in one sentence how pu-erh differs from black tea
- I have tasted at least one tea from three or more of the six categories
- I have identified at least one tea where I would like to explore the category more deeply

Exercise: Blind Category Challenge

Ask a friend or family member to prepare two cups of tea from different categories without telling you what they are. Use only your senses — colour, aroma, taste — to identify the category. Record your guess and reasoning before revealing the answer.

- What does the liquor colour tell you about likely oxidation level?

- Describe the aroma: is it floral, vegetal, woody, earthy, or sweet?

- State your category guess and the single most important clue that led you there.

- After the reveal: what sensory signal would have confirmed the correct category earlier?

Water, Temperature, and Steeping Precision

Turn the extraction science into repeatable personal brewing parameters through structured calibration sessions and a brew log.

Worksheet: Water Source Comparison Log

Test a minimum of two water sources (tap, filtered, and/or bottled) using a TDS meter or test strips. Brew the same green tea (at least 2 g per 200 ml, 80 °C, 3 minutes) with each water source and record results below.
Water source name

TDS reading (ppm or mg/L)

pH reading (if tested)

Chlorine visible taste? (yes/no)

Liquor clarity (brilliant / clear / hazy)

Sweetness (1–5 scale)

Bitterness (1–5 scale)

Body (thin / medium / full)

Overall preference rank

Exercise: Temperature Calibration Drill

Using the same tea (a forgiving green such as Longjing or Sencha), brew three cups at different temperatures: 70 °C, 80 °C, and 90 °C, holding steep time constant at 2 minutes. Taste in ascending temperature order. Note how bitterness, sweetness, and body shift with each 10-degree increase.

- At 70 °C: is the tea extracting fully? Describe the body and any flatness in flavour.
- At 80 °C: is this the sweet spot for this tea? What flavours are most present?
- At 90 °C: does bitterness or astringency spike? How does the finish change?
- Based on this drill, what is your preferred temperature for this specific tea?

Checklist: Brewing Precision Checklist

- I have measured my tap water TDS and know whether it falls in the recommended 50–150 ppm range
- I have identified my preferred water source for daily tea brewing
- I own or have access to a variable-temperature kettle or use the cooling-pour method
- I can state the correct temperature for at least four tea categories from memory
- I have run at least one multiple-infusion session tracking steep-time increments
- I keep a basic brew log (tea name, temperature, leaf weight, steep times) for at least three sessions

Tasting, Terroir, and the Gong Fu Session

Develop and document your sensory vocabulary, map terroir against cup character, and log your first complete gong fu sessions.

Exercise: Tasting Vocabulary Builder

Brew one oolong (any style) for this exercise. Evaluate it across all four tasting dimensions — dry leaf, wet leaf, liquor colour, and taste. For each dimension, attempt to use at least two specific descriptors from the flavour wheel families (floral, fruity, vegetal, nutty/toasty, spicy, earthy, sweet). Avoid generic terms like 'good', 'nice', or 'strong'.

- Dry leaf: describe shape, colour, and any aroma released when the warmed, covered gaiwan is opened before water is added.
- Wet leaf aroma immediately after steeping: which top notes (floral, fruit, vegetal) and base notes (woody, mineral, earthy) can you detect?
- Liquor appearance: describe colour (use a colour reference like amber, copper, pale gold) and clarity (brilliant / slight haze / cloudy).
- Taste and finish: describe sweetness, bitterness level (1–5), astringency (drying sensation on gums), body, and whether there is a returning sweetness (hui gan) in the aftertaste.

Worksheet: Terroir and Origin Mapping

For five teas you either own or plan to purchase, fill in the origin details and connect them to expected flavour outcomes using the course's terroir framework.

Tea name

Category

Country and region

Altitude (m) if known

Harvest season / flush

Cultivar (if stated on packaging or vendor page)

Terroir factor you expect to taste (mineral / shade umami / altitude stress / soil type)

Actual flavour notes after tasting

Checklist: Gong Fu Session Readiness

- I have a gaiwan or small teapot of 100–150 ml capacity
- I have a fairness pitcher to decant before pouring into cups
- I have at least two small tasting cups (20–40 ml)
- I have completed at least one warm-up rinse sequence correctly (warm all vessels before adding leaf)
- I have performed the dry leaf aroma step (heated gaiwan before water) and recorded the aroma
- I have completed a session of at least five sequential steeps on the same leaf charge
- I have noted the flavour arc: how the tea changed from steep 1 through steep 5+

Exercise: Terroir Comparison: Same Category, Two Origins

Source two teas from the same category but different origins (e.g. Longjing from Hangzhou vs a Yunnan green; or Darjeeling First Flush vs Assam TGFOP). Brew side-by-side at identical parameters. Use this exercise to isolate terroir and cultivar as variables.

- Before tasting: state what you expect the terroir difference to produce based on altitude, soil type, and growing region.

- Describe the dry leaf appearance differences — size, shape, colour, trichome density.

- After tasting: what is the single most distinct flavour difference between the two origins?

- Does the origin information on the packaging (altitude, garden name, harvest date) now mean more to you than before this exercise?

Matcha and Building Your Tea Collection

Document your matcha technique through a calibration log, then design and commit to your personal collection blueprint.

Exercise: Matcha Preparation Calibration

Prepare usucha three times in separate sessions, varying one parameter each time: water temperature (70 °C vs 75 °C vs 80 °C), matcha dose (1 g vs 1.5 g vs 2 g), or whisking duration (15 sec vs 25 sec vs 40 sec). Use the prompts to record the outcome of each variable change.

- Froth quality: describe bubble size (fine / coarse / none) and coverage (full surface / partial / none) after whisking.

- Colour: is the froth bright green, dull green, or brownish — and which variable most affected the colour?

- Taste: describe bitterness (1–5), umami intensity, sweetness, and whether the powder taste is integrated or chalky.

- Based on three calibration sessions, what are your personal optimal parameters for usucha: temperature, dose, water volume, and whisking time?

Worksheet: Personal Tea Collection Blueprint

Use this worksheet to design your collection. Fill in each tier and update it every 3 months as your palate evolves. Leave the 'actual flavour notes' and 'repurchase' columns blank until you have tasted each tea. Collection tier (daily / exploration / gift / aging)

Tea name

Category

Vendor and source URL

Quantity to purchase (g)

Estimated cost per session (\$)

Storage method (tin / foil / breathable jar)

First tasting date

Actual flavour notes (fill after tasting)

Repurchase? (yes / no / try different vendor)

Checklist: Collection and Matcha Readiness Checklist

- I have prepared usucha at least twice and can describe the correct froth texture from memory
- I have sifted matcha before preparation and understand why clumps affect the final cup
- I store my matcha in an airtight container away from light and heat, and have noted its opening date
- I have identified my daily anchor tea and repurchase source
- I have identified at least two tea categories I have not tried and plan to explore
- I have a storage solution for each category in my collection (tin, foil bag, or breathable jar as appropriate)
- I have written my collection blueprint including at least one seasonal purchase plan for the next 12 months

Your Action Plan

1. Purchase a variable-temperature kettle or practise the two-pour cooling method to reliably hit 75–80 °C for green and white tea within this week
2. Test your tap water TDS and identify a water source in the 50–150 ppm range to use consistently for all tea brewing
3. Source one representative tea from three categories you have not yet tasted, using a named single-origin vendor who lists harvest date
4. Run one comparative tasting session with at least three different categories, writing three flavour descriptors per tea using the flavour wheel vocabulary
5. Complete a full gong fu session with 6–8 g of oolong in a 100–150 ml gaiwan, tracking steps 1

through 6 with steep time and a brief flavour note for each

6. Prepare usucha three times using the calibration drill, varying one parameter each time until you find your preferred dose, temperature, and whisking duration

7. Build your collection blueprint: name your daily anchor tea, two category-gap exploration teas, and one seasonal purchase target for the next 12 months

8. Set up a simple tea journal (notebook or spreadsheet) with fields for date, tea name, origin, brew parameters, and at least three tasting notes per session

9. Identify one new single-origin tea to purchase each month for the next three months — track your palate development against notes from your first sessions

10. Schedule a seasonal buy reminder for April/May (Shincha and Darjeeling First Flush) to experience fresh-harvest teas at their peak

