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A Spot of Tea

By [Jennifer Cirillo](#) |

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At a time when healthful eating and drinking seems to be more top of mind than ever, tea has maintained its popularity with consumers offering a more flavorful alternative to water while being less caloric than soft drinks.

Teas' good-for-you properties, such as antioxidants and polyphenols, also have helped the category attract a health lifestyle consumer. And for those looking for a little caffeine boost, tea has that too. According to Mintel, the RTD tea market is forecast to reach \$8.3 billion by 2014 in the U.S. and 44 percent of consumers say they plan on drinking more healthful beverages, such as those that are natural, have lower calories and are less sweet.

Working with tea flavors and extracts in beverages can be challenging with powders creating dusting and sometimes off tea flavors developing due to contact with light or over brewing.

Beverage ingredient companies continue to formulate solutions that find that right balance of flavor and sweetness with the aim of eliminating the challenges associated with formulating tea drinks.

Amelia Bay's John Crandall, VP sales and marketing, says, "Beverage manufactures and private label brands have moved to brewed liquid tea extracts due to their ease of use and their superior results once in solution."

Amelia Bay offers a range of tea products including liquid tea extracts and concentrated liquid brewed tea solids that don't require the need for caramel coloring or kettle brewing. The liquid extracts are an ideal alternative to instant tea podders, Crandall says.

"Instant tea powders can cause clouding and sedimentation as well as off flavors, and are difficult to work with due to dust and mess," he explains.

The flavor trends within the tea category mirror those that the industry is seeing across all categories—the use of culinary ingredients and mature flavor profiles. “We are seeing trends in tea that include a spicy or exotic component to a green or white tea,” says Brandon Olson, director of research and development for Prinova USA. “We’ve seen requests for tea powders and these exotic flavors, usually natural.” Prinova works with Teawolf, an international leader in natural ingredients for the beverage market, to offer liquid tea distillate for green, black, white and oolong teas. The portfolio of products provides a natural tea profile and a liquid tea extract that includes the polyphenols that give tea its antioxidant properties.

BI Nutraceuticals recently introduced a new tea product—an antioxidant tea with polyphenols from its green tea extract and ginger extract in a carrot juice.

“People are drinking teas and green teas for the antioxidant properties for the polyphenols,” notes Randal Kreienbrink, BI’s director of Marketing. BI is targeting anyone who is looking for beverages with antioxidants, polyphenols and vitamins, but Kreienbrink says that the company is specifically targeting baby boomers that are looking for those types of benefits from their beverages.

Tea also is being used in energy products for a healthy and natural boost. Among the tea solutions at Wild, the company is offering a number of products that play into the current trend of tea plus hydration. Beverage options include: Peach Mango White Tea Coconut Water, Blackberry Coconut Water Black Tea and Natural Diet Strawberry Lemonade Green Tea.

Wild’s tea distillates are translucent making them ideal for “water white” applications and its extract and concentrates have a “clean label” contributing genuine flavor and mouth feel of freshly brewed tea, the company says. “Hybrids with other beverage formats such as juice and tea combinations, tea and dairy combinations, sparkling teas, and teas specifically developed for kids are becoming more popular,” says Jessica Jones-Dille, associate director of marketing for Wild Flavors, Inc. Classic teas including black and green teas remain popular, she adds while white tea still enjoys success and is often paired with fruit flavors.

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