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**Black tea — Definition and basic  
requirements**

*Thé noir — Définition et caractéristiques de base*

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## Foreword

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International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of technical committees is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO 3720 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 34, *Food products*, Subcommittee SC 8, *Tea*.

This fourth edition cancels and replaces the third edition (ISO 3720:1986), which has been technically revised. It also incorporates the Technical Corrigenda ISO 3720:1986/Cor.1:1992 and ISO 3720:1986/Cor.2:2004.

## Introduction

Tea is grown and manufactured in numerous countries of the world and is blended or drunk in many more. Black tea may be produced from tea from one garden or region or may be a blend of teas from two or more origins.

The desired characteristics of a black tea and the resulting liquor depend on many factors including the type of water to be used for brewing, whether the liquor is to be drunk with or without milk or lemon, and on individual tastes.

The objects of this International Standard are to specify the plant source from which black tea is to be manufactured and to set requirements for certain chemical characteristics which, if met, are an indication that the tea has been subjected to recognized good production practice.

It is a matter for the parties concerned whether to apply the requirements of this International Standard to a consignment or lot of black tea. The quality of teas is usually assessed by tea tasters, who base their judgements on their previous experience of tea from the producing area and their knowledge of national or regional conditions, and preferences in the consuming country. Account may be taken of characteristics such as the appearance of the tea before preparation of a liquor, the appearance of the infused leaf and the appearance, odour and taste of the liquor. An expert tea taster can assess whether a tea would be unlikely to comply with the chemical requirements. Thus, in practice, time and expense can be saved by submitting teas for chemical analysis only if the tea is considered "suspect" by a tea taster.

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# Black tea — Definition and basic requirements

## 1 Scope and field of application

This International Standard specifies the parts of a named plant that are suitable for making black tea for consumption as a beverage and the chemical requirements for black tea that are used to indicate that tea from that source has been produced in accordance with good production practice.

This International Standard also specifies the packing and marking requirements for black tea in containers.

This International Standard is not applicable to scented or decaffeinated black tea.

## 2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 1572, *Tea — Preparation of ground sample of known dry matter content*

ISO 1573, *Tea — Determination of loss in mass at 103 °C*

ISO 1575, *Tea — Determination of total ash*

ISO 1576, *Tea — Determination of water-soluble ash and water-insoluble ash*

ISO 1577, *Tea — Determination of acid-insoluble ash*

ISO 1578, *Tea — Determination of alkalinity of water-soluble ash*

ISO 1839, *Tea — Sampling*

ISO 3103, *Tea — Preparation of liquor for use in sensory tests*

ISO 5498, *Agricultural food products — Determination of crude fibre content — General method*

ISO 6078, *Black tea — Vocabulary*

ISO 9768, *Tea — Determination of water extract*

ISO 14502-1, *Determination of substances characteristic of green and black tea — Part 1: Content of total polyphenols in tea — Colorimetric method using Folin-Ciocalteu reagent*

ISO 15598, *Tea — Determination of crude fibre content*

### 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

#### 3.1

##### black tea

tea derived solely and exclusively, and produced by acceptable processes, notably withering, leaf maceration, aeration and drying, from the tender shoots of varieties of the species *Camellia sinensis* (L.) O. Kuntze, known to be suitable for making tea for consumption as a beverage

### 4 Basic requirements

#### 4.1 General requirements

The tea shall have no taint and shall be reasonably free from extraneous matter. Liquor for assessment of taint shall be prepared by the method specified in ISO 3103. The assessment shall be described in the test report using terms defined in ISO 6078.

#### 4.2 Chemical requirements

**4.2.1** The tea shall comply with the requirements specified in Table 1, in which all the figures given are expressed on the basis of the material oven dried at  $(103 \pm 2) ^\circ\text{C}$  by the method specified in ISO 1573.

**4.2.2** No limit is specified for the “moisture” content of the tea as received. If desired, the actual loss in mass at  $103 ^\circ\text{C}$  of the sample as received may be determined and the result recorded in the test report. In such cases, the determination shall be carried out by the method specified in ISO 1573.

**Table 1 — Chemical requirements for black tea**

Characteristic	Requirement	Method of test
Water extract, % mass fraction	32 min.	ISO 9768
Total ash, % mass fraction	8 max. 4 min.	ISO 1575
Water-soluble ash, % mass fraction of total ash	45 min.	ISO 1576
Alkalinity of water-soluble ash (as KOH), % mass fraction	1,0 <sup>a</sup> min. 3,0 <sup>a</sup> max.	ISO 1578
Acid-insoluble ash, % mass fraction	1,0 max.	ISO 1577
Crude fibre, % mass fraction	16,5 max.	ISO 5498 or ISO 15598 <sup>b</sup>
Total polyphenols, % mass fraction	9 min.	ISO 14502-1

<sup>a</sup> When the alkalinity of water-soluble ash is expressed in terms of millimoles of KOH per 100 g of ground sample, the limits shall be: 17,8 min.; 53,6 max.

<sup>b</sup> The specific method for the determination of crude fibre in tea is specified in ISO 15598, however for the purpose of routine estimation, the general method specified in ISO 5498 is adequate. In cases of dispute, the method of determination should always be that specified in ISO 15598. The requirement of 16,5 % mass fraction remains unchanged regardless of the method used.

### 5 Sampling

See ISO 1839.