

# SPICE OF THE MONTH

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## March's spice isn't exactly a spice! It's black tea.

Well... it's complicated. This one sent us to Merriam-Webster to define what the word "spice" really means:

*any of various aromatic vegetable products (such as pepper or nutmeg)  
used to season or flavor foods*

So, black tea — an aromatic vegetable product used to flavor something edible — IS a spice! It's also the drink, the leaves used to make the drink, and the shrub that produces the leaves used to make the drink. It's tea all the way down.

But we'd be remiss to stop with this definition. The historical and cultural impact of tea begins in 2737 B.C.E., when — legend has it — the Chinese Emperor Shen Nong discovered tea by accident, noting that his water developed stimulating and healing properties after leaves from a tea plant fell into it.

There's concrete evidence that the use of tea in Chinese medicine has a history of over 4,000 years; in China, it was used as an ingredient in other dishes during the Zhou dynasty (1121-256 B.C.E.), and was finally recognized as a beverage in its own right during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.E.-220 C.E.).

The tea in this month's kit is Yunnan Black, grown in the Yunnan Province in southwestern China. Davidson's Organics describes it as "robust," with "a peppery, sweet flavor profile that creates a full-bodied black tea brew with a spicy finish."

**All books listed here are available to check out from the Croton Free Library!**

### **Our sources:**

- Davidson's Organics: [davidsonstea.com/Yunnan\\_Black\\_Loose\\_Leaf.aspx](http://davidsonstea.com/Yunnan_Black_Loose_Leaf.aspx)
- *Tea: History, Terroirs, Varieties* by the Camellia Sinensis Tea House

### **The recipes in this kit are:**

- Chicken Smoked with Rice and Tea from *The Chinese Kitchen* by Eileen Yin-Fei Lo (p. 302-3)
- Marbled Tea Eggs, from *The Asian Grandmothers Cookbook* by Patricia Tanumihardja (p. 51-2)

### **See our cookbook collection for additional info & recipes, like:**

- Country Ham with Maple, Tea, and Cardamom Glaze & Sauce from *Great Meat Cookbook* by Bruce Aidells (p.356-7)
- The basics of brewing tea (p.185-6) and how to tea-dye linens and clothes (p. 205-8) from *Alice's Tea Cup* by Haley Fox & Lauren Fox
- Black Tea Cola, from *Homemade Soda* by Andrew Schloss (p.194)

**What did you make with your black tea?**

Post it on social media with the hashtag  
**#CrotonSpiceClub** and tag us, or send a photo &  
description to [reference@crotonfreelibrary.org](mailto:reference@crotonfreelibrary.org)!

**Black tea is from Davidson's Organics.**