



Beverages

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INTRODUCTION

"Taste" can mean many things. This requires some preliminary provisions before we set off analyzing various beverages and their relationship with the culture and communication of taste. When talking about "taste", we mean any of the following:

- Taste as one of the five senses – sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste;
- Taste as an amalgamation of sensory qualities, which we discover in a certain item – food or drink (e.g. taste of strawberry);
- Taste as the ability to assess something as beautiful or ugly, appropriate or inappropriate, valuable or cheap. We say about someone that they have good or bad taste, based on whether they can make such distinctions.

Taste, in its third sense, is called "aesthetic taste". It is an individual capability, but it's also social capital (Bourdieu, 2000). What does that mean? It's a fact that we share similar preferences as others. This holds true for music, art, fashion and, of course, food and drink. Imagine the difference between people who visit fast-food joints and those who only consume raw fruit! Taste is not only an individual

capability, but also a collective phenomenon. We could imagine people split into different groups, based on their tastes. If you share the collective preferences of a certain group, you would most likely belong to that group. And vice-versa – if you want to become part of a certain group, you will have to teach yourself certain taste, based on the group's preferences. Cultivating taste, however, is not an easy task. Imagine how difficult it is to learn to distinguish good wine from low quality wine, or culinary art from cheap pottage! This takes education, time and money. This is why taste turns out to be "social capital". People invest in taste, and, in turn, it repays them by allowing them access to certain societal groups.

In the following subchapters, we will analyze some well known beverages and their link to taste in its third sense. Our exposition will follow the same simple structure: we will first look at the essence of the beverage, and its history. Then, we will look at what social groups it is used and what its role is in terms of taste.

1. ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND TASTE

Alcohol is an organic compound. There are many different types of alcohol, some of them – such as methanol – being especially poisonous, even in small quantities. Alcohol, used in beverages, is called ethanol and its chemical formula is C_2H_5OH . Ethanol is a natural result of the process of **fermentation**, where certain yeasts transform sugar into alcohol. It can also be manufactured by **distillation**. **Distillation** allows for producing liquids with a much higher alcohol concentration, compared to **fermentation**.

Alcohol is the most widely spread drug on the planet. It is in no sense harmless, although its moderate use has a pleasant effect on our mentality and communication. In larger quantities, it can lead to consequences, which are especially harmful to the human body. The likelihood of becoming **addicted to alcohol**, as to any drug, should not be underestimated. This is why its consumption is a practice, which requires not only a healthy organism, but also certain social skills.

Who drinks what, when and how? The answers to these questions could tell us a lot about not only the specific beverages in question and their use, but also about the preferences of people and about customs in different societies.

2. WINE

2.1. HISTORY AND SYMBOLISM

Wine and beer are the most ancient alcoholic beverages in human history. The reason behind this is the fact that **fermentation** spontaneously occurs in fruits or grains with a high enough sugar content. There are many beverages known in history, which result from the natural **fermentation** of fruit juices. Wine, however, is only made from grapes, which comes from the species of vines, known as **vitis**. The wine grape vine is

called **vitis** vinifera and all possible wine grape sorts belong to that species.

The oldest archaeological proof shows us that people started making wine around 8000 B.C. This means that wine appeared around the time humans settled down. This is the time when the nomad tribes slowly settled and started developing agriculture and livestock breeding. Wine was part of the cultures of Mesopotamia, Babylon and Egypt. At first it was used in various rituals and was only consumed by the highest ranking social layers – priests, shamans, kings and their entourage. The connection between wine and **religious rituals** is due to the narcotic effect of alcohol on human psychology. People believed that it helps them contact the world beyond.

The production and use of wine slowly spread through Egypt, Asia Minor and the Mediterranean. Drinking wine was a **status symbol** even then. This can be witnessed in many images and inscriptions that remain from ancient Egypt. From Egypt and Asia Minor, wine enters Hellenic culture as well. In ancient Greece it became an everyday beverage, accessible to a wide range of people. Wine trade brought profit and prestige. The cult to Dionysus, the god of wine, became one of the most popular cults in ancient Greece, after which it carried over to Roman civilization, where Dionysus is known as Bacchus. Thanks to Greeks, and then Romans, winemaking spread all across Europe.

During the Middle ages, wine still held an important role – not only in the day-to-day life, but also in Christian religious symbolism. In the pagan cultures of Greece and Rome, wine was a symbol of the intoxication of life, the madness of love, prosperity. In Christianity, this symbolism transferred onto the persona of Jesus Christ and the hope for salvation. In the sacrament of the Communion, wine symbolizes the blood of Christ and is a key element in the connection between man and God. Little wonder that the major producers of wine in the Middle ages were monasteries and monastic orders.

Wine spread beyond the borders of Europe after the Age of Discovery in XV century. After the Industrial revolution of the 19th century, wine production was also industrialized. This made the beverage even more accessible, and today wine market is part of the global economy.

2.2. WINE AND TASTE

Wine has always been a status symbol. There are several reasons for that. It is evident that wine used to be much more expensive, compared to other alcoholic beverages, such as beer. This is due to the long technological process, which begins at the vineyard and finishes at the storage site. Before the appearance of the distilled, highly alcoholic beverages, wine contained a higher proportion of alcohol compared to beer, which made it a preferred choice, due to its stronger alcoholic effect.

The taste of wine is also an important factor, which turned it into a more sophisticated beverage, compared to all others.

Due to the different grape varieties and the different techniques of wine-making, its taste is exceptionally complex and diverse. Different wines have different taste, and their quality and taste can vary widely. The skill to distinguish different nuances and elements in the aroma and taste of wine, combined with the skill to "taste" its quality, is an art in and of itself, which, even in antiquity, set apart the people with a high **social status**.

In 20th and the beginning of 21st century, wine has become ever more accessible for ever larger groups of people. The social profile of wine-drinkers is now harder to determine, although some US researchers claim that the leading group of wine connoisseurs is comprised of middle-aged, well educated, upper-middle-class people (Charters, 2006).

Drinking wine, as a social practice, is made more complex by the fact that it is traditionally combined with food, which raises the issue of combining the right wine with the right foods. In cultures, where wine has been known for millennia, its consumption with certain foods is part of culinary tradition. Still, the appearance of new wines and foods in the global age makes this issue valid again. What sets wine apart from other beverages in the consumer society is that wine requires a certain level of education in order to be understood and consumed in a socially acceptable manner. It is considered bad taste when wine is mixed with non-alcoholic beverages or drunk from paper or plastic cups. It is also considered unacceptable to consume aged red wines together with salads rich in vinegar. For the educated European, the taste of wine is an aesthetic subject matter, which should not be corrupted by any additions or inappropriate combinations. These examples may appear obvious to the European, for whom wine is a part of ordinary culture. This, however, is not so for cultures, for whom wine is a novelty, and who literally have no "taste" for wine.

FOCUS 1

Wine in China

In China, during the last decades, there has been an increased interest for wine, since it is perceived as a symbol for success in the fast-growing middle class; however, most consumers still do not possess the required social experience. It is not unusual in China to consume exceptionally expensive French wines mixed with Coca Cola. To the educated European, this is equivalent to a crime; however, in other cultures, diluting wine with soft drinks seems to be as acceptable as mixing vodka or gin. In fact, China is now the largest global wine market in the world, due to the large number of people who live there. It appears, however, that the largest wine market is not well prepared for wine. This is why contemporary wine marketing and most wine

brands are especially sensitive when it comes to educating their consumers.

The situation described above tells us a lot about the fact that wine is the beverage, which requires suitable culture and communication the most. Choosing and consuming wine requires aesthetic taste and knowledge, which are acquired through different forms of education. There is no other drink, which is the main topic for so many magazines, handbooks, educational seminars, specialized academic and university courses. Wine tourism is indicative for the variety of the means of communications. This sector of hospitality focuses on a few important matters – wine as a product in the context of its origin and production, marketing, advertising, education and, naturally, business.

3. BEER

3.1. HISTORY

Beer is the other alcoholic beverage, which results from natural **fermentation**. Humans started producing beer after they learned to grow grain cultures, from which it is prepared – barley and wheat. Beer was certainly well known in Mesopotamia and Egypt, as many archaeological artefacts prove.

The technology of producing beer takes less time than the technology for making wine, and has always been more accessible due to the wider distribution of barley and wheat, as compared to grapes. The drink has a lower alcohol content than wine. This particularity of beer has set its lower **social status** from antiquity. It has always been more accessible and cheaper, and was consumed by larger number of people, compared to wine. In times when water was often a source of pathogens, beer was valued as a relatively harmless drink. This is due to the heat treatment that the drink goes through during the production process, but also to the fact that alcohol is an antiseptic.

Beer production flourished in medieval Europe. During the early middle ages, the main centers of production were the monasteries, who owned plenty of land and resources. During the late middle ages, more and more independent brewers appeared, who slowly displaced monasteries as centers of production. These were most frequently the owners of pubs and taverns. Slowly, beer production fell under taxation laws in different countries, as during the 16th century the first licensed brewers appeared. One of the first examples for this is the purity law for beer of 1516, approved by Wilhelm IV, duke of Bavaria. This law sets requirements for both the raw materials, from which beer can be made (water, barley and hops), and also the rules for trade and pricing.

The spread of glass bottles during the 18th and 19th century plays an important part in the proliferation and trade of beer. Simultaneously, the production process was improved, thanks to various discoveries, which raised the quality, clarity and shelf life of beer. As urban population grew and the industrial revolution unfolded, the first large breweries appeared, who produced and sold great amounts of quality beer at low prices.

3.2. BEER AND TASTE

Large breweries in the late 19th and early 20th century faced the need to create new means of communication and distribution. Local brewers took a step back to the large brands, who conquered the national markets with all the means advertising provided. During the 1950s, large breweries in the US and Europe started using an ever growing set of advertising and marketing tools, in order to link beer consumption and mass sports. TV turned out to be the best media for the objective. Beer, naturally, does not lead to peak sport performance, but it did become an integral part of sport experience for the mass audience. Thanks to more than half a century of advertising and marketing, beer became a part of sports “consumption”– and to such an extent that today watching football or baseball is somehow “naturally” accompanied by beer.

The relationship of beer with sports culture creates a special attitude and a certain competitive taste for the drink. Different brands compete and rival in the same way as different teams do. It is expected that the fans of a given beer are just as loyal to the brand as they are to their favorite team. This way, advertising beer has more to do with the preferences and expectations of the audience, than with the qualities of the drink itself.

An interesting change in the production and consumption of beer took place in the mid-80s – first in the US, and then elsewhere. This is the appearance of the so-called “**craft beer**”, which marks a real sort of brewing revolution in the past few decades. **Craft beer** meets the needs of the audience, which doesn’t want to identify with the major brands, and which does not necessarily associate beer with sports.

The taste of artisan beer is the main element of consumer interest. Thanks to this “**craft** revolution”, the attitude towards the taste of beer changed considerably. It is no longer the mass, monotonous and cheap product, which is available anywhere. **Craft beer** brewers and aficionados created a new culture, which values variety, experimentation and local culture. This leads to the need for educating and informing the consumers and merchants, much in the same way it holds true for wine culture. The first organizations for educating beer specialists – similar to **sommeliers** – appeared in the 90s. These beer **sommeliers** are known as **cicerone**.

FOCUS 2

The trend of craft beer

Craft beer returned the interest to small, local breweries, where beer is made in small batches and with a very special attention to quality. For a few decades, the number of so-called “micro” breweries in the US, Canada and Europe grew at a remarkable rate. To illustrate the growth, we

could note that in the late 1980s, there were fewer than 500 breweries registered in the US, which managed to satisfy the market. In 2016 there were more than 5000 breweries, while in 2019, they are already over 7000!

4. VODKA

4.1. HISTORY

As opposed to wine and beer, vodka is a spirit, produced through **distillation**. In alcoholic **distillation**, fermented liquids are heated up until the alcohol begins to evaporate. After that, the vapors are cooled down, until they condense into a liquid, which has a much higher alcohol content than the original. There is historical evidence that ancient Greeks knew this process. It is not, however, known if they ever used it for producing beverages. This also holds true for Arab alchemists, thanks to whom the word "alcohol" was assigned to liquids, resulting from **distillation**. Between 11th and 14th centuries, an increasing number of alchemists in Europe describe the process and the resulting liquid, which many called "aqua vitae" or "water of life". After 15th century, **distillation** became even more widespread in different parts of Europe, as the technical means improved and the resulting substances became valued not only as medication, but as intoxicating drinks.

Vodka was first made by the Slavs in 15th century. It is controversial whether it was the Poles or the Russians who made it first. The word "vodka" is a diminutive form of "water" and is a common term in most Slavic languages. The drink is usually made from grains, potatoes or molasses.

During 15-16th century, Russian tsars realized how important vodka is for economy and monopolized its production. Since the population got **addicted** to the beverage, it became a fast-moving good, which brought immense profit to the state. The Russian economy was literally dependent on vodka production and trade, just as a majority of the population was **addicted** to the drink. For several centuries, thanks to the state policies, vodka became a steady part of the life and economy of the Russian empire.

Today, vodka is still a traditional and widespread beverage in Russia, Poland, the Baltics and the Nordic states. During 19th century, mixing vodka with various alcoholic and soft drinks became popular in Europe and America – what is today called "cocktails". Vodka was the preferred basis for many different cocktails, which helped make its way around the world. This is why vodka can be found in virtually any bar or restaurant today.

4.2. VODKA AND TASTE

The main metaphor for vodka is fire. During the **distillation** process, the original liquid has to be heated up, which was originally done by fire. The resulting liquid is flammable – i.e. "fiery", and the taste of vodka – as typical for hard alcoholic drinks – reminds of burning. As opposed to other spirits, such

as whisky or gin, vodka has a relatively weak taste. Similar to water, vodka appears tasteless. This way tasting vodka is oftentimes reduced to feeling warmth or burning, without experiencing any other taste characteristics. In this sense, vodka's taste is "pure" since it contains nothing but the sense of burning.

Due to the lack of specific taste differences, vodka manufacturers face the need to identify their products via other means. Some manufacturers stress on the quality of water they use, while others rely on history, bottle and label design, or the precision and number of **distillations**. Vodka advertising has become part of pop culture, where celebrities take an important role.

Similar to all other beverages, vodka is used in different manners, depending on social context. Inebriation comes more quickly, when compared to wine or beer. Back in tsarist Russia, vodka was preferred not only by the common folk, but also by nobility. Then, as today, the quality was distinguished based on the raw materials and the purity of the **distillation**. Traditionally, the lower social strata drank vodka in order to quickly reach intoxication, and not to experience taste. This way vodka plays the role of nothing more than a narcotic, whose main goal is to help the consumer to experience temporary pleasure and to forget the burdens of everyday life. Even then, however, vodka is combined with certain foods and is consumed according to specific rules. It is poured in small glasses, then drank instantly (as a shot). Afterwards, the burning sensation in the mouth and throat is subdued by small bites of food. People of higher social status would drink vodka much the same way, but the drink itself, as well as the food, would be of a higher quality. The pattern was the same, independent of the fact that some would consume the drink with caviar, while others could only afford rye bread.

Lacking a specific taste makes vodka a universal basis for many cocktails. This is one of the reasons for its wide spread in West starting in the 19th century – not as a "pure" drink, but as a basis for many different cocktails. This way drinking vodka has become more complicated and has reached far outside the context, typical for the Slavic and Nordic peoples. Cocktail connoisseurs created their own drinking culture. Cocktails are not simply a mix of different beverages, but rather an expression of aesthetic and social tastes, which sometimes rest on complex cultural and historical contexts. The consumption of various cocktails during all the 20th century is invariably connected with literature, cinema and fashion.

FOCUS 3

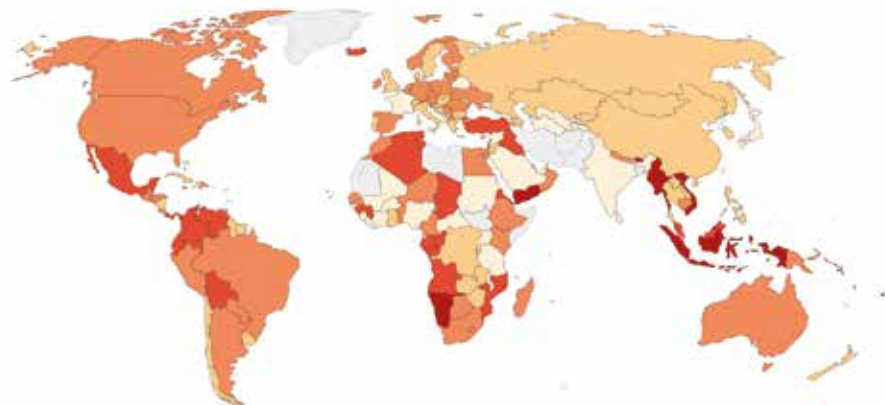
Alcohol's consumption in the world

Alcoholic maps of Europe, based on WHO data (<https://our-worldindata.org/alcohol-consumption>).

Consumption of beer, wine and spirits as part of the total consumption of alcohol in different countries.

Beer as a share of total alcohol consumption, 2010

Beer as a share of total alcohol consumption, as measured by the share of total pure alcohol intake.

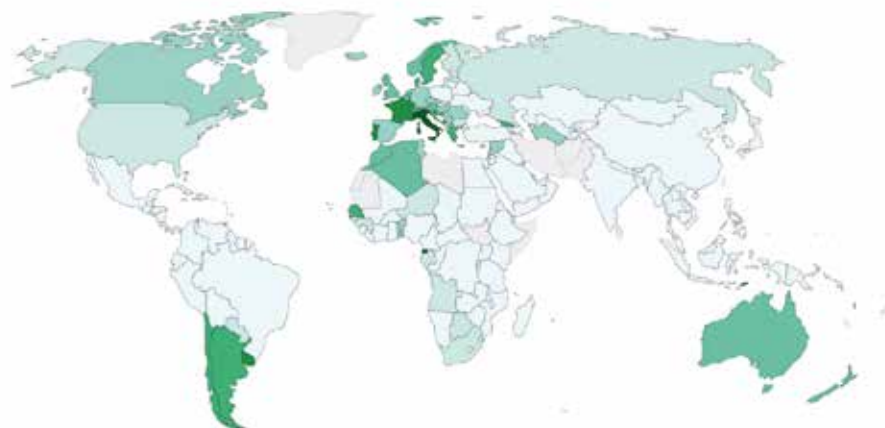


Source: WHO Global Health Observatory (GHO)

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Wine as a share of total alcohol consumption, 2010

Wine as a share of total alcohol consumption, as measured by intake in litres of pure alcohol.



Source: WHO Global Health Observatory

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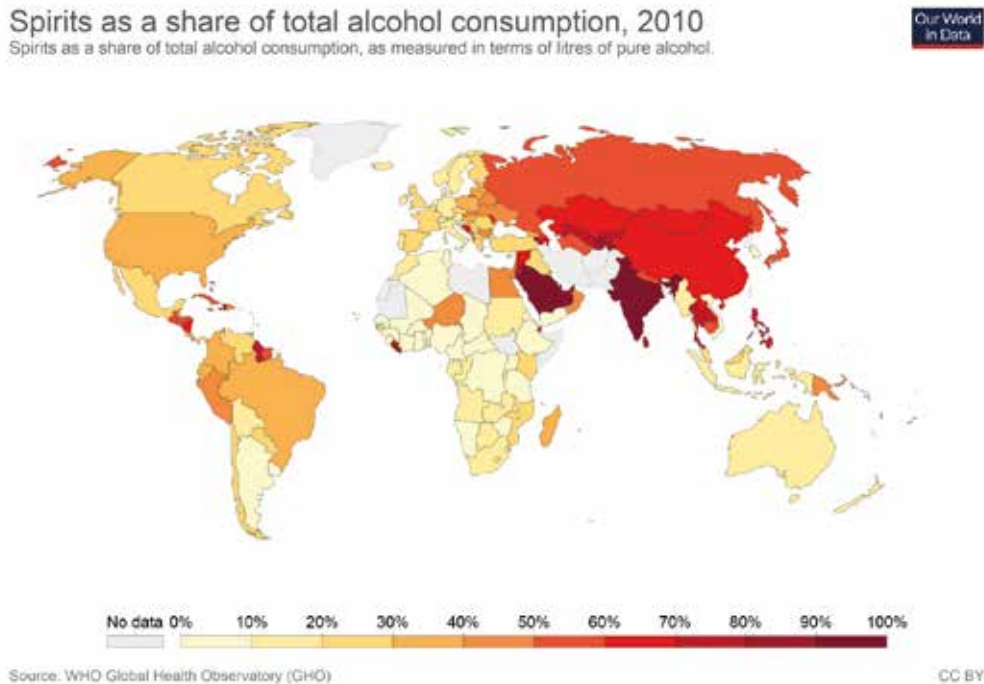


Fig. 1. Manca didascalio

5. TEA

5.1. HISTORY

Tea is prepared from the leaves and flowers of the *Camellia Sinensis* plant. The beverage originates from China, and it's difficult to pinpoint the exact time of its appearance. Legends say that 5000 years ago, a stray leaf fell in emperor Shen-nong's cup of hot water. This way, by force of mythological chance, he discovered the beverage.

Of course, legends are far from historic facts. The first evidence for tea as a beverage date from the Han dynasty, 2nd century B.C. Still, it is possible that tea was known as a medication much earlier, around 10th and 9th centuries B.C. In writings by Confucius, tea is mentioned alongside other herbs. Initially, it was used as a medication, which can be seen in medical texts dating from the 3rd century. In the 9th century, Buddhist monks from China carried it over to Japan, from where the herb quickly spread across all of Asia and became a daily drink.

During 10-15th, knowledge and techniques for growing tea developed further. Different states of **fermentation** were discovered, different varieties, drying methods, cutting and storage means, which lead to a variety of types of tea, and a diversity of preparation methods. Still, it is important to note that all types of tea (white, yellow, green, black, oolong, etc.), independently of the sort, origin and way of processing, are made from the same plant.

Tea arrived in Europe as late as the early 17th, as it was the Dutch who first brought it from China. During the same century, tea slowly made its way from China to Russia. By the end of 17th, it spread throughout Europe, initially as a medicine and finally as a daily drink.

Tea gained prominence during the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in Great Britain. The *East India Company* provided the main import from China, and the beverage became so popular that it became a staple of British culture from the period. This made the British market strongly dependent on China. The Chinese, on the other hand, kept the technology and methodology of growing and processing a secret for a long time. It should be noted that not until the 19th century did Europeans understand that green tea and black tea come from the same plant (The Cambridge World History of Food, 2000).

By the early 19th century, tea was already one of the most important imports in Great Britain. It seemed logical that the British look for other sources, as not to be as dependent on the difficult Chinese import. India turned out to be a good place, due to its suitable climate, and due to the fact that the British controlled the region. This way, by the middle of the century, the British managed to uncover the secrets of growing and processing tea, and began their own production in the vast territories of India and Sri Lanka.

Globalization in the 20th century turned tea into the most widely spread and easily available non-alcoholic beverage in the world. Unlike many other non-alcoholic drinks, tea is not only practically harmless, but also carries various benefits for human health, which is an additional source of interest. There is hardly another drink in the world, which, like tea, is a staple for so many cultures.

5.2. TEA AND TASTE

Due to its widespread, tea and its various uses are part of a wide range of national cultures. The social use of tea is the subject of hundreds of studies, and the variety is so wide that we can only look at a few of the more significant examples – from the Japanese tea ceremonies, to the afternoon tea in Victorian England.

The first teahouses appeared in China in the 7th century and slowly became important social and cultural centers, where people went to meet, eat, drink tea and communicate. Chinese teahouses flourished between the 16th–18th centuries, and were the stage for various events, such as dances, Chinese opera, poetry recitals, etc. Even today, tea is the national beverage of China, and modern teahouses, although not as important, still fulfill the same social functions.

Apart from being the center of social life in China, tea is also important for **ritual** practices of the Buddhist monks. It was a habit for them to drink tea before meditation. This practice underwent an interesting development in Japan, where tea spread in the 9th century, initially through Buddhist monks. It became an important part of Zen Buddhism, as during the following centuries the elements of the Japanese tea ceremony took shape. The Buddhist monk Myōan Eisai/Yōsai (1141–1215) introduced the practice of preparing green tea, which was first ground to fine powder.

Slowly, this method of preparing tea started being used outside of the context of religious practices. By the end of the 17th century, tea was so widely spread that it became part of daily life in all Japanese social strata. The Japanese tea ceremony became an important **ritual**, which concentrated philosophy, tradition and aesthetics. This way, tea drinking in Japan is simultaneously a daily tradition, but also a **ritual** practice, which cannot be reduced to mere consumption. There is probably no better illustration of the relationship between a drink or food with a deep social, historical and aesthetic context. It is not only the tea that is important – the tea ceremony also concentrates on the tools, timing, motions during preparation and serving. Due to this, tea culture in Japan requires special education, but also specific skills, which demonstrate refined taste.



Fig. 2. Japanese tea ceremony
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Outdoor_Tea_Ceremony.jpg

Tea occupies a central niche in Russian culture as well, which also has its peculiarities in terms of tea consumption. Russians use the so-called "samovar" – a metal kettle, in which water is heated. At the top of the samovar, there is a small teapot, where a very strong tea is steeped. A small quantity of the concentrated tea is poured in a cup and is then diluted with water from the kettle. In the past, samovars were heated by means of coals, whereas today they are mostly electric. In the 18th and 19th centuries, tea drinking quickly spread through Russian culture. It suffices to open the pages of some Russian classics, such as Dostoyevsky or Chekhov, for one to see how important tea is for Russian social life.



Fig. 3. Samovar
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samovar_2.jpg)

No less important was tea for Great Britain and its colonies. Tea drinking became a fashionable tradition around the middle of the 17th century, thanks to King Charles II and his wife – the Portuguese Infanta Catherine de Braganza. By the mid-19th century, tea had become a main social practice in the English bourgeoisie. The so-called “afternoon tea” became a main daily ritual. The central place of tea-drinking in English society is reflected in art and literature from the period. “It’s always tea-time” is a notable phrase by the Mad Hatter in Lewis Carroll’s “Alice in Wonderland” (1832-1898).

One of the main drivers of the “afternoon tea” was the society of the bourgeois dames, for whom it was unacceptable to drink alcohol. Their presence in the famous English clubs,

where alcohol was consumed until late night, was strictly forbidden. Their appearance in the newly emerging coffee houses was also undesirable. This is why the ladies turned the late afternoon tea into a regular ritual and focused British social life around it. They would dress up especially for the event, and socializing was accompanied by light snacks and sandwiches. This is when the taste for spiced and enriched teas was cultivated – such as the ever popular Earl Gray, which is black tea with bergamot.

At the beginning of the 21st century, tea is still the most widely consumed non-alcoholic beverage in the world, and it is expected that its popularity will grow in the following decades.

FOCUS 3

Boston Tea Party

On December 16th, 1773, in Boston, Massachusetts, which was a British colony at the time, a protest was organized, which entered history as the “Boston Tea Party”. The residents of Boston, who had dressed up as Native Americans, dumped into the harbor all the tea delivered by the East India Company, as a protest against the monopoly and the taxation of tea by Britain. This was the motive and the cause of the war for independence of the United States.



Fig. 4. Currier and Ives, The Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor, 1846
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/currier-and-ives/the-destruction-of-tea-at-boston-harbor-1846>

6. COFFEE

6.1. HISTORY

Coffee is a product of the *Coffea* plant, also known as the coffee tree. The plant looks more like a bush, whose beans, after roasting, are ground to different types of coffee. There are different varieties of *Coffea*, but the most well known are *Coffea Arabica* and *Coffea Canephora* (*Coffea Robusta*), known simply as "arabica" and "robusta".

The plant comes from Ethiopia, where the tribes most likely used the beans by simply chewing them, without processing them in any way. The first to use coffee as a drink were the Islamic Mystics in Yemen around the beginning of the 15th century. The Sufis discovered the refreshing qualities of coffee, which helped them stay awake during long nightly prayers. They found a way to roast, grind and brew coffee, and consumed it in a form much the same as the one we know today. Thus, the coffee beverage itself was actually born in Yemen and during the following centuries spread throughout Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. The Sufis carried the drink to the main Islamic centres, where it became especially popular during the Ramadan, due to the fact that coffee reduces appetite and refreshes. Very quickly, legends appeared, linking coffee and Muhammad; in one of them, it was Archangel Gabriel (Jibril) who personally disclosed the secrets of coffee to the Prophet, so that the faithful can replace the forbidden and sinful wine with it. In fact, "coffee" comes from the Arabic "qahwah" – a word, which originally meant "wine".

No doubt, coffee and its spread would not be possible without Islam and its rise in the Middle ages. Coffee quickly became a daily drink in the Muslim world. Around the middle of the 16th century, the first coffee shops appeared. Due to the fact that the beverage requires roasting, grinding and brewing, its spread went hand in hand with places where this process could be demonstrated, after which the coffee was served, ready to be consumed. This is how coffee reached Istanbul, thanks to two Syrian merchants, who in 1555 opened a coffee shop, where to present and sell the new drink (The Cambridge World History of Food, 2000). This discovery quickly changed the daily life in the Muslim world. In Muslim culture, where alcohol is forbidden, the coffee shops became the center of social life, where men met and talked, played backgammon, ate and, of course, drank coffee.

Coffee inevitably penetrates from Muslim culture into Western Europe, mostly through wars, diplomacy and trade. The Venetian and Dutch merchants are quite possibly the first to transport the beverage into Europe at the turn of the 17th century. Initially, coffee was perceived as an exotic medicine against all sorts of ailments. Around the second half of the century, coffee was popularized thanks to Venetian, English and Dutch merchants, and thanks to diplomatic contacts between the Western European states and the Ottoman Empire. One of the legends states that after the unsuccessful siege of Vienna in 1683, the

Ottoman troops left behind bales of coffee. The brew appealed to the Viennese, and so they became some of the first Europeans to use it as a refreshing beverage. Independent of the legend, however, the first Venetian coffee shop opened in 1629, and the first one in Oxford – in 1637.

Thus, around the end of the 16th century, throughout Europe, the coffee shop was shaping up as an important element in public space. It became a major social focus, where people would gather to communicate. This holds true even today, and not only in Europe. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the coffee shop became a central part of the urban environment. Drinking coffee was now a daily practice, and even some private, commercial and even political issues were discussed over a cup of coffee. European coffee shops became a platform for people to express their political and social discontent. During all of 19th and 20th century, different groups of people with common political and artistic attitudes would gather in certain coffee shops, with which they would closely identify. There, they would organize and unite, sharing their tastes, their ideas, worries and plans.

FOCUS 4

French revolution and coffee shops

On July 12, 1789, Camille Desmoulins – a French journalist and politician, made a speech to his friends and supporters at the French Café Foy, calling for armed rebellion. The effect was so strong that Parisians organized spontaneously, which lead to the Storming of the Bastille two days later, on July 14, 1789. Of course, even today historians argue about the historical laws, the reasons and the processes, which lead to the French Revolution. It is notable, however, that the start of one of the most important events in modern history can be traced to the public space of the coffee shop!

The industrial revolution and the urbanization of the 19th century, followed by globalization in 20th century, turned coffee into one of the most widely spread and well-known products in the world. Coffee democratized people's daily life around the world, since it is just as easily accessible and just as preferred, no matter what their ethnic, religious or **social status**. We will look at some of the most important moments in the modern "taste" of coffee in the following pages.

5.2. COFFEE AND TASTE

Europeans changed the way coffee is roasted, brewed and prepared. Turkish coffee, which is boiled and served without filtering the grounds, is not well liked in Europe. Coffee was now being filtered and strained, and in many places it was being consumed with milk, honey and other ingredients. The way it was

roasted was also changed, which resulted in a different taste. Still, until the 19th century the consumption of tea was prevalent, especially in Great Britain.

The country, where coffee impressively overtook tea, is the United States. The thirteen English colonies, prior to the Revolutionary War, traditionally shared the British preference for tea. After the end of the War, the Americans increasingly drew back from tea and preferred coffee. The emancipation of Americans from English culture was just one of the reasons. Another factor lay in the friendly relations with France and the free trade with its African colonies, where a lot of coffee was grown. This reduced coffee prices in the US and turned coffee into an accessible commodity.

In US cities, coffee shops grew much slower than they did in Europe and the Middle East. Coffee was purchased together with the other food items for the household, and was roasted and prepared at home. Merchants quickly took over the niche, and by the end of the 19th century started selling roasted and ground coffee, ready to be brewed at home. At the same time, the establishing and distribution of easily recognizable brands took place. Preparing coffee became part of the household chores of American homemakers, and the main place for drinking coffee was at home.

The ways coffee was transported, traded and prepared, changed radically in the 19th and 20th centuries, mostly due to technology. Raw coffee lasts longer, but is unsuitable for sale to the end customers, because it then requires a long and hard process, to be prepared for consumption. It needs to be roasted, ground and then brewed. In the 18th century, the methods and means used, were exceptionally diversified. Everyone would roast, ground and brew coffee as they thought best. Once roasted and ground, however, it would quickly lose its aroma and its flavor, which made it unsuitable for long hauls, and decreased its shelf life.

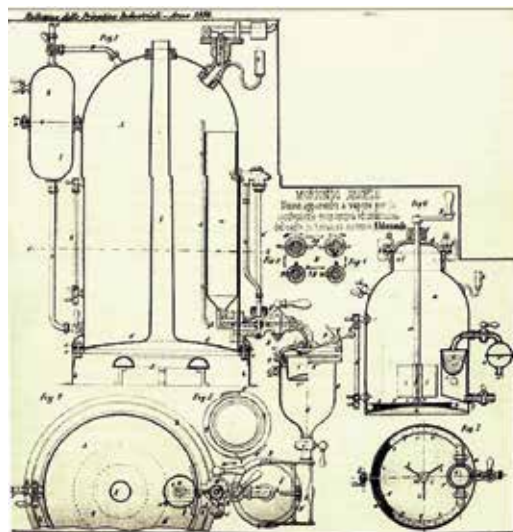


Fig. 5. Espresso machine schema, patented by Angelo Moriondo, Torino.
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Espresso-machine-first-patent-angelo-moriondo.jpg>

In Europe, coffee shops took care of preparing the coffee and carried out the entire process – from purchasing the raw coffee, all the way to serving the hot brew. The invention of the **espresso** machines in Italy in the 19th century was the beginning of a real revolution, as they significantly strengthened the flavor of coffee and reduced the time needed for its brewing. Prior to that, customers would have to wait a long while for their coffee, and the taste was much weaker, compared to **espresso**. Another important invention was the coffee percolator, which changed forever the way coffee was prepared at home.

Together with faster deliveries and with the use of new packaging technologies, the trade and delivery of roasted and ground coffee was now possible. The first brand of roasted, ready-to-brew coffee, was *Osborn's Celebrated Prepared Java Coffee*, which appeared in New York in the 1860s. At the beginning of the 20th century, vacuum packaging was the technology, which allowed to preserve the flavor and taste of coffee for a long time.

All these inventions went hand in hand with the global increase of coffee production. In the 19th and 20th centuries, Latin American countries, and mostly Brazil, became world leaders in production and export of coffee. Industrial production, together with global demand and supply of coffee, made this beverage one of the most popular products in the world. Just like tea, coffee has its central place in the daily life of various cultures around the world. One of the ways to get to know them is to actually take a look at how they drink their coffee, what kind of coffee they prefer, and where it belongs in their day-to-day culture. This, however, is a task, which extends far beyond the covers of our book.