



To Nature

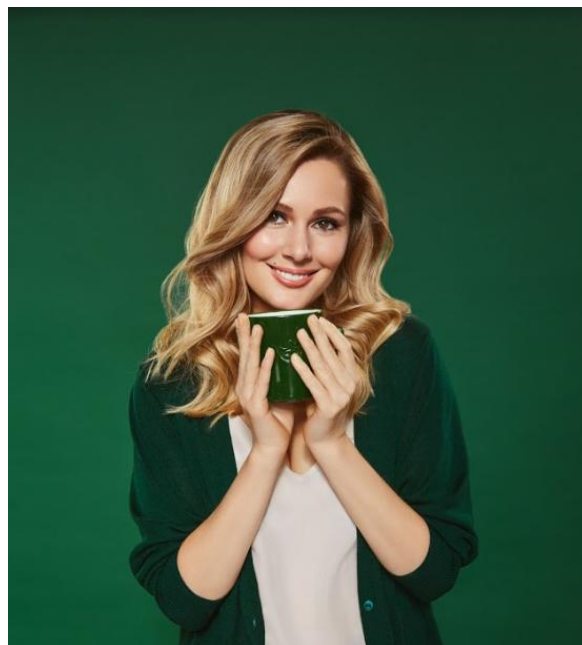
It may indeed be fantasy when I
Essay to draw from all created things
Deep, heartfelt, inward joy that closely
clings; And trace in leaves and flowers that
round me lie
Lessons of love and earnest piety.
So let it be; and if the wide world rings
In mock of this belief, it brings
Nor fear, nor grief, nor vain perplexity.
So will I build my altar in the fields,
And the blue sky my fretted dome shall be,
And the sweet fragrance that the wild
flower yields
Shall be the incense I will yield to Thee,
Thee only God! and thou shalt not despise
Even me, the priest of this poor sacrifice.
Samuel Coleridge

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TEA or COFFEE?



The wake-up call

For many, the caffeine kick is the primary reason we choose either beverage; it's the oil to our engines when we're still feeling a bit creaky in the morning. Based purely on its composition, coffee should win hands down: a cup of tea has about half the dose (40 milligrams) of the stimulant caffeine that you would find in a standard cup of brewed filter coffee (80 to 115 milligrams). Yet this doesn't necessarily reflect the jolt of the wake-up call.

*Caffeine dose is not the whole story:
perhaps our expectations also
determine how alert we feel*

Dosing subjects with either tea or coffee, one (admittedly small) study found that **both beverages left subjects feeling similarly alert later in the morning.** Although that study was based on self-reported feelings of alertness, clear differences have failed to emerge in more objective measures of concentration, either **—such as reaction times.** Indeed, when you dose up on tea made to the equivalent strength as coffee, it actually proves to be **more effective at sharpening the mind.**

Verdict: Against logic, tea seems to provide just as powerful a wake-up call as coffee. It's a draw.

Sleep quality

The biggest differences between coffee and tea may emerge once your head hits the pillow. Comparing people drinking the same volume of tea or coffee over a single day, researchers at the University of Surrey in the UK confirmed that although both drinks lend similar benefits to your attention during the day, **coffee drinkers tend to find it harder to drop off at night** – perhaps because the higher caffeine content finally catches up with you. Tea drinkers, in contrast, had longer and more restful slumbers.

Verdict: Tea offers many of the benefits of coffee, without the sleepless nights – a clear win.

Tooth staining

Along with red wine, coffee and tea are both known to turn our pearly whites a murky yellow and brown. But which is worse? Most dentists seem to agree that **tea's natural pigments are more likely to adhere to dental enamel** than coffee's – particularly if you use a mouthwash containing the common antiseptic chlorhexidine, which seems to attract and bind to the microscopic particles.

Verdict: If you want a perfect smile, coffee may be the lesser of two evils.

A balm for troubled souls...

In England, it's common to give "tea and sympathy" to a distressed friend – the idea

being that a cup of Earl Grey is medicine for troubled minds. In fact, there is some evidence that tea can soothe your nerves: regular tea drinkers do tend **to show a calmer physiological response to unsettling situations** (such as public speaking), compared to people drinking herbal infusions. Overall, people who drink three cups a day appear to have **a 37% lower** risk of depression than those who do not drink tea.

There is some evidence that tea can soothe your nerves

That each cup of coffee a day seems to reduce **your risk of developing depression by around 8%**. In contrast, other beverages (such as sweetened soft drinks) only increase your risk of developing mental health problems.

Verdict: Based on this limited evidence, it's a draw.

...and a balm for bodies

Similarly tantalising, though preliminary, epidemiological studies have suggested that both coffee and tea offer many other health-giving benefits. A few cups of either beverage a day appears to reduce your risk of diabetes, for instance. (The exact size of the benefit is still under discussion – estimates vary from **around 5 to 40%**.) Since even decaf coffee confers the same benefits, it seems likely that other nutrients may be oiling the metabolism so that it can still efficiently process blood glucose without

becoming insensitive to insulin – the cause of diabetes.

Both drinks also seem to moderately **protect the heart**, although the evidence seems to be slightly stronger for coffee, while tea also appears to be slightly protective against **developing a range of cancers** – perhaps because of its antioxidants.

Verdict: Another draw – both drinks are a surprising, health-giving elixir.

Overall verdict: Tea became a winner!



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