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Fact Sheet

Decaffeinated Tea Products — Technical Bulletin

This report is a general update of decaffeinated tea products and is not intended to be a position statement of the Technical Committee. Its intent is to summarize current issues and restate the adopted position of the Technical Committee.

Solvent extraction using ethyl acetate and carbon dioxide in the supercritical state are the two current methods used for decaffeinating black leaf tea. Although both methods are selective for caffeine extraction and create no toxicity hazard, the carbon dioxide method generally results in a superior tea because it takes out fewer other solubles. Ethyl acetate, though useful in removing caffeine, also removes a high percentage of desirable flavor recursors.

The Tea Association defines *Decaffeinated Tea* as tea with a reduced caffeine level not in excess of 0.4% by dry weight. This definition has been accepted in the United States on a voluntary basis.

Presently, there is no voluntary standard for instant tea or similar instant products. A reasonable target level of five milligrams per serving for instant tea has been suggested for future consideration.

The Canadian Government has proposed that the Canadian tea industry put residual caffeine levels on product labels. No such proposal by the FDA has been actively pursued in the United States for tea products. With recent growing public interest in food and health issues, labeling may become a major issue.