

## Choice Organic Teas - Himalaya Green & Lemon Lavender Mint (Vegan, Gluten-Free, Nut-Free, Soy-Free)

I have a confession &hellip; I thought that the Choice brand of organic teas was a generic store brand. Not that I have anything against generics mind you, but they aren't really a splurge in my book. Consequently, the higher price of Choice Organic (relatively speaking) caused me to pass it up whenever I was looking for a new tea to trial. Perhaps it was the name "Choice" or the simplistic label, but I can't help but wonder if others may have the same instant impression, and if this might hurt their sales just a bit? Okay, maybe it's just me.

Regardless, once I procured some samples of this tea (two of their newest teas in fact), I was pleasantly surprised by its virtue. Organic, sustainably manufactured, and fair trade; in fact in 2000, Choice Organic Teas became the first tea crafter in the United States to offer Fair Trade Certified<sup>®</sup> tea. Where have I been?

### Himalaya Green Tea

A new variety in the extensive Choice line-up, this tea is definitely for "real" green tea fans. Pure green tea as enjoyed in Asia is slightly bitter, a bit grassy if you will, and not a touch sweet. Many Americanized green teas are sweetened or weak, but Choice does not bow to the popularity contest. Their green holds true to its roots and is a mighty strong green at that. On their site, they call it "gently refreshing." While I enjoyed the tea, these really aren't the descriptive words I would use. It has a pure, bold, and distinct flavor that reminds me greatly of the tea that was served in my favorite Chinese restaurant (run by a friend from Hong Kong who imported all of his teas).

Unfortunately, I made the mistake of leaving the tea bag in my mug too long. My favorite mug is quite large, and since so many teas are weak, I rarely need to remove the bag promptly nor do they ever have enough potency to make a second cup. But, this Himalaya green tea from Choice is strong, and alas becomes a bit bitter if you allow it to brew for too long. Be sure to remove the bag after a few minutes, and enjoy a second jumbo mug of the green stuff!

Oh yes, and if the whole organic, fair trade thing wasn't enough, Choice donates 10¢ per box to Save The Himalayan Kingdom, a non-profit organization with programs focused on environment, health, and literacy issues.

### Lemon Lavender Mint Herb Tea

I really wasn't sure what to expect from this flavor combination. Peppermint tea is one of my favorite morning teas, for its refreshing caffeine-free wake up call. Lemon is typically a bit sharp in flavor, while lavender is known for soothing and relaxing, a bedtime herb if you will. The entire package seemed a bit contradictory, so I was somewhat apprehensive.

Because of the lavender, I did opt to enjoy it as a nightcap. I usually enjoy a cup of chamomile in the evening to relax my senses, but I was pleasantly surprised by the soothing powers of lavender. This was my first taste of lavender (infused or otherwise), and I was surprised at how mellow it was in flavor. The mint was much more sedated than my bold peppermint tea, serving more to enliven the lavender and leave a nice clean aftertaste. Luckily, I really didn't detect the lemon, as I am not a huge fan of lemon in tea.

I really was pleasantly surprised by the seductive blend of this tea. It was soothing, calming, and fresh for a nice crisp taste that left me feeling warm and relaxed. I think it may be time for me to move on from the chamomile tea, and welcome this new flavor infusion. A definite two thumbs up.

Where to Purchase: Obviously this stuff isn't too hard to find if I was mistaking it for a generic (boy do I feel foolish now!). But... if you can't find it in your local store, see the Choice website to order. Their tea comes in packages of 16 individually packaged tea bags.