

ARMENIAN TEA Proper Storekeeping Manual

The main enemy of any kind of tea is light, temperature and humidity. A light robs the leaves of their flavor, the heat alters the aroma and flavor and the moisture cause fungi problem.

Herbs are fragile, but when stored (cool, dry), they have a "life" adequate for any normal manufacturing and foodservice service kitchen needs (from tree until nine year if necessary).

The basic rules on storing and handling will help to protect your investment:

KEEP A WAY FROM HEAT...

At the very least, they need to be kept cool and dry never near a smokehouse or kitchen range or other source of high heat; never in a wash-down area or by the dishwasher or other place where the containers are apt to get wet or humidity gets high. In large-scale storage, the containers should always be palletized and kept away from outside walls.

KEEP IT COOL AND DRY...

Cool means no higher than 68 F (20 C) and dry are no higher than 60% relative humidity.

COLD STORAGE RECOMMENDED...

Whenever possible, cold storage (32 F to 45 F) is highly recommended, particularly for the linden, rose, hibiscus and all kind of petals tea where volatile oil and/or characteristic odors are important quality attributes. At 80 to 90 F, rose will lose about 3% of its color every 10 days. At higher temperatures, losses are even more rapid. In cold storage, however, these color losses are reduced. Cold storage also protects against infestation and rancidity in the fixed oils (of such items as mint and thyme).

KEEP AWAY FROM LIGHT...

Light sensitive items such as rose, linden, iris and other petals and green herbs need to be protected against direct exposure to sunlight and fluorescent lights.

LET YOUR SUPPLIER DO THE STORING...

Unless you have ample and adequate storage capacity, the best strategy is to let your supplier do as much of the storing as possible. Calculate your long-term needs and contract for them, which will hold the price. But schedule the shipments to meet current needs only (i.e. up to 90 days). This way you'll have less money tied up in inventory and you let the experts do the storing. A good supplier has optimal storage conditions, including cold storage when it's needed, and has the turnover that keeps his stocks fresh.

TRAIN YOUR PERSONNEL...

The final key is making sure your personnel understand the nature of infusion and fruit tea. Closing containers quickly after every use, measuring with dry utensils and keeping them away from steam are crucial. Explain that when you can smell a tea it means its aroma and flavors are escaping. Herbs have a lot of fragrance and test to give, so this is money, and it's only good business practice to save as much as possible.

At the retail level it is good to store tea in cotton or paper bag.

For shipping, paper sacks have become the package of choice, because it's ecologically sound and easy to move. Plywood chests or cellophane should cover tea packed in paper drums during the shipment.

We store our teas in wooden packages that protect it from both elements-moisture and light.