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**GLOSSARY OF TEA TERMS**  
(FIRST REVISION)

**BUREAU OF CEYLON STANDARDS**



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Gr. 7

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SRI LANKA STANDARD  
GLOSSARY OF TEA TERMS

**FOREWORD**

This Sri Lanka Standard Specification has been prepared by the Drafting Committee of the Bureau on Tea. It was approved by the Agricultural and Food Products Divisional Committee of the Bureau of Ceylon Standards and was authorised for adoption and publication by the Council of the Bureau on 1981-10-26.

Over the years there has been built up in the tea industry in Sri Lanka a vocabulary of tea terms which is peculiar to the industry. These terms are generally the means of describing subjective assessments of the finer distinction and differences in the appearance and flavour of different qualities of tea. Because of the subjective nature of the assessment, there can arise instances when different interpretations can be given to the same term. In order to bring about a degree of uniformity in the use of these terms, it was considered desirable to prepare a glossary of tea terms commonly used in Sri Lanka.

This standard is the 1st revision of CS 71, first published in 1969. In this revision, the terms have been grouped under four categories, namely, dry leaf appearance, infused leaf, liquor and general terms. It is considered that the terms given in this glossary should be sufficient for all normal trade purposes.

Tea terms generally tend to be characteristic of each country, reflecting the conditions obtaining therein. There are often considerable variations in the meanings of the terms used in different countries. The efforts made by the International Organisation for Standardization (ISO) to standardize the usage of these terms internationally has resulted in the issue of a Draft International Standard ISO/DIS 6078 on Black Tea - Vocabulary. Considerable work has been done by the ISO in reaching agreement on definitions and the usage of these terms. In the revision of this Sri Lanka Standard, due consideration has been given to this ISO publication.

## 1 SCOPE

This standard is a compilation of a glossary of tea tasting terms relating to tea manufacture and those used by producers, buyers, blenders and brokers in the trade.

## 2 TERMINOLOGY

The terminology of the various terms have been grouped under the following four headings.

- a) Dry leaf appearance
- b) Infused leaf
- c) Liquor
- d) General terms.

The most common grades of teas are given in Appendix A.

### 2.1 DRY LEAF APPEARANCE

- 2.1.1 Attractive - Well made, uniform in colour, size and texture.
- 2.1.2 Black - Leaf black in colour, a descriptive term.
- 2.1.3 Bold - A self explanatory term describing leafy teas which are inclined, large and loosely rolled.
- 2.1.4 Brownish - A descriptive term.
- 2.1.5 Choppy - Descriptive term used in relation to cut leaf, heavy teas, for example : Broken Pekoe.
- 2.1.6 Clean - Free of stalk, fibre, or extraneous matter.
- 2.1.7 Crushed - Leaf which had been physically damaged on account of external pressure etc. resulting in uneven and dusty particles.
- 2.1.8 Curly - Rolled leaf with a curled appearance.
- 2.1.9 Dusty - A term used to describe the presence of a noticeable amount of dust particles.
- 2.1.10 Even - True to grade, consisting of pieces of approximately even size.
- 2.1.11 Fibry - Containing a noticeable proportion of fibre.

- 2.1.12 Flaky - Untwisted, flat in appearance, generally light in weight.
- 2.1.13 Grainy - Describes hard leaf Fannings and Dust grades which are small, clean or granular.
- 2.1.14 Grey - Colour of leaf, a descriptive term.
- 2.1.15 Grit - Small particles of sand, stone, etc. in the tea.
- 2.1.16 Gritty - Normally applied to dust and fanning grades representing non-orthodox manufacture, similar to CTC, where the leaf is particularly hard to the touch.
- 2.1.17 Irregular - Uneven particles.
- 2.1.18 Large - Applicable to any tea which is large for its grade.
- 2.1.19 Leafy - A tea containing larger leaves than would be normal for its grade.
- 2.1.20 Make - A well made tea, true to grade.
- 2.1.21 Mixed - Leaf of different particle sizes resulting in a mixed appearance.
- 2.1.22 Neat - Well-made and even.
- 2.1.23 Open - Very loosely rolled leaf principally applicable to large leaf.
- 2.1.24 Powdery - Fine dust.
- 2.1.25 Ragged - Large, untwisted leaf, generally bold in appearance.
- 2.1.26 Red-end - Redish stalk.
- 2.1.27 Sandy - Particles of sand in the tea.
- 2.1.28 Shelly - Flaky, with a shell-like appearance.
- 2.1.29 Shotty - Pellet-like, and generally used to describe well-made pekoes.
- 2.1.30 Small - Applicable to any tea which is considered small for its grade.
- 2.1.31 Spongy - Loosely rolled leaf springy, compressible.
- 2.1.32 Stalky - Containing an excessive amount of stalk.
- 2.1.33 Stylish - Attractive, well-made.

- 2.1.34 Tippy - Containing a percentage of tip, either golden or silver.
- 2.1.35 Twisted - Leaf with a desirable twist which has been imparted as a result of proper withering and rolling.
- 2.1.36 Uneven - An assortment of different particle sizes, indicative of poor grading.
- 2.1.37 Well-made - True to grade and of even particle size.
- 2.1.38 Wiry - Long, well-twisted leaf, normally associated with well-made, orange pekoes.

## 2.2 INFUSED LEAF

- 2.2.1 Bright - A lively and attractive appearance, indicative of a tea with good liquoring characteristics.
- 2.2.2 Coppery - Infused leaf which is copper coloured.
- 2.2.3 Dull - Unattractive, not lively and generally indicative of tea with poor liquoring characteristics.
- 2.2.4 Even - Infused leaf, which is uniform in colour and even in size.
- 2.2.5 Greenish - Infused leaf, having a greenish appearance.
- 2.2.6 Mixed - Infused leaf of more than one specific colour and also uneven in size.
- 2.2.7 Reddish - Infused leaf having a reddish appearance.
- 2.2.8 Uneven - Infused leaf of uneven colour and/or size.

## 2.3 LIQUOR

- 2.3.1 Baggy - Hessian taint.
- 2.3.2 Bakey - A degree of burn, produced by slight over-firing. Classified as an undesirable characteristic.
- 2.3.3 Betelnut - An artificial characteristic resulting from betel nut contamination.
- 2.3.4 Body - Describes a liquor possessing fullness and strength as opposed to a thin liquoring tea.
- 2.3.5 Brassy - An unpleasant metallic taste.
- 2.3.6 Bright - Bright in colour with briskness as opposed to dull.



- 2.3.7 **Brisk** - A tea lively in character with distinct point as opposed to dull and soft.
- 2.3.8 **Burnt** - An undesirable character found in teas which have been subjected to abnormally high temperatures during firing, a degree worse than *Bakey*.
- 2.3.9 **Character** - A desirable quality in the liquor of a tea which permits the recognition of its country of origin or of a particular district within that country.
- 2.3.10 **Cheesy** - A taint associated with the taste of cheese.
- 2.3.11 **Chesty** - An undesirable resinous character found in tea which has been contaminated by insufficiently seasoned or inferior chest panels.
- 2.3.12 **Clean** - A harsh undesirable liquor.
- 2.3.13 **Coarse** - A harsh undesirable liquor.
- 2.3.14 **Coloury** - Describes a tea which possesses an adequate depth of colour.
- 2.3.15 **Common** - A general term employed for inferior tea having little to commend it.
- 2.3.16 **Creamy** - Describes a tea which on cooling down produces a precipitate referred to as cream.
- 2.3.17 **Dry** - Slight bakiness.
- 2.3.18 **Dull** - An undesirable characteristic in a tea as opposed to bright.
- 2.3.19 **Earthy** - An undesirable taste reminiscent of earth.
- 2.3.20 **Empty** - A tea liquor having no substance, that is, lacking in fullness.
- 2.3.21 **Eucalyptus-** A characteristic associated with the eucalyptus plant.
- 2.3.22 **Fine** - Teas of exceptional quality and flavour.
- 2.3.23 **Flat** - Having lost character and briskness due to long storage.
- 2.3.24 **Flavoury** - A delicate aromatic seasonal character.
- 2.3.25 **Fruity** - A self-explanatory term applied to liquors which have an over-ripe character.

- 2.3.26 Full - A liquor possessing colour, strength, substance and roundness as opposed to *Empty, Thin*, etc.
- 2.3.27 Grassy - A self explanatory term, reminiscent of grass.
- 2.3.28 Green - Indicates an unpleasant astringency.
- 2.3.29 Gummy - Eucalyptus taint.
- 2.3.30 Harsh - Describes a raw, unpleasant characteristic in liquor.
- 2.3.31 Heavy - Used to denote a thick coloury, strong dull tea which is generally undesirable.
- 2.3.32 Hungry - Thin and lacking in strength.
- 2.3.33 Juicy - Succulent with colour and strength.
- 2.3.34 Light - A liquor which is lacking in depth of colour.
- 2.3.35 Malty - A characteristic suggestive of malt, often produced by a slight degree of overfiring.
- 2.3.36 Mature - A tea which is at its prime in respect of liquoring characteristics.
- 2.3.37 Mellow - Describes the liquor of a tea which has matured very well. As opposed to *Raw*, etc.
- 2.3.38 Metallic - A characteristic metallic taste; undesirable.
- 2.3.39 Mouldy - A term used to describe the taste and odour of tea which was being contaminated by mould.
- 2.3.40 Muddy - A dull, nondescript liquor; also used to describe appearance of a liquor.
- 2.3.41 Musty - Suspicion of mould.
- 2.3.42 Neutral - A tea liquor which possesses no pronounced characteristics.
- 2.3.43 Old - Having lost through age those attributes it possessed originally.
- 2.3.44 Out of condition - A tea which has lost its inherent character.
- 2.3.45 Papery - Undesirable taste, imparted by contact with paper.
- 2.3.46 Plain - Lacking in desirable characteristics, particularly quality.

- 2.3.47 Pointy - A most desirable brisk character.
- 2.3.48 Pungent - A tea liquor having marked briskness and an astringent effect on the palate without bitterness. A most desirable cup character.
- 2.3.49 Quality - Denotes brightness in liquor with certain specific desirable characteristics.
- 2.3.50 Rank - A combination of undesirable characteristics in which sourness is usually predominant.
- 2.3.51 Raw - An astringent and bitter tasting tea.
- 2.3.52 Rich - Describes a mellow, thick liquor with quality.
- 2.3.53 Rosy - A bright coloured liquor.
- 2.3.54 Round - A mellow liquor.
- 2.3.55 Smoky - An odour or taste of smoke.
- 2.3.56 Self-drinking - An original tea, which is palatable by itself without a need for blending with other teas.
- 2.3.57 Smooth - Means more or less the same thing as *round*. Not so pronounced as a *full* liquor in colour and strength.
- 2.3.58 Soft - Lacking in briskness and point.
- 2.3.59 Sour - An undesirable acid odour and taste.
- 2.3.60 Spicy - Having a characteristic suggestive of spices, for example: Cinnamon, cloves, etc.
- 2.3.61 Stale - A rather *old* character used when describing teas which have been stored for too long or under humid conditions.
- 2.3.62 Stewy - An unpleasant character, which is normally the result of overinfusion or faulty firing.
- 2.3.63 Strong - A liquor with predominant tea character but not necessarily thick.
- 2.3.64 Sweaty - A disagreeable and unpleasant character, suggestive of sweat.
- 2.3.65 Sweet - Free from unpleasant character, but possessing no particular attribute.
- 2.3.66 Tainted - Taste and odour foreign to tea.
- 2.3.67 Tarry - Having strong suggestion of tar.
- 2.3.68 Thick - Denotes a strong, coloury liquor.

- 2.3.69 Thin - A tea lacking in body and strength.
- 2.3.70 Tinny - An artificial character associated with tin.
- 2.3.71 Tired - Having lost character and briskness as a result of being kept too long.
- 2.3.72 Toasty - A tea which has been slightly overfired during manufacture.
- 2.3.73 Useful - Denotes a tea with desirable all-round qualities. However, this term is not used in relation to teas of outstanding character.
- 2.3.74 Washy - Thin, watery, little tea character.
- 2.3.75 Weak - Thin and lacking in tea character.
- 2.3.76 Weathery - Descriptive of a soft character associated with teas made during very wet weather.
- 2.3.77 Weedy - A thin liquor with some hint of vegetable character. Used in a derogatory sense.
- 2.3.78 Woody - Suggestive of wood.
- 2.4 GENERAL TERMS
- 2.4.1 Black tea - Tea derived solely and exclusively, and produced by acceptable processes, notably fermentation and drying, from the leaves, buds and tender stems of varieties of the species *Camellia Sinensis* (Linnaeus) O. Kuntze known to be suitable for making tea for consumption as a beverage.
- 2.4.2 Green tea - Tea which has been subjected either to steam or heated in pans in order to inactivate the enzymes for the purpose of preventing fermentation. Thereafter the leaf is rolled and fired and the resultant product is referred to as Green tea.
- 2.4.3 Oolong tea - A tea in which the oxidative stage has been prematurely terminated (semi-fermented) resulting in a product which is in between Green tea and Black tea.
- 2.4.4 CTC - Abbreviation for process of crushing, tearing and curling. Describes tea manufactured with a machine using a special type of roller which has the effect of crushing, tearing and curling the leaf after the withering process.

- 2.4.5 Garden mark - The mark under which a tea from an estate is offered for sale. However, this could be different from the name of the estate.
- 2.4.6 Legg-cut - Tea manufactured using the legg-cut machine (a type of tobacco cutter), and thereafter fermented and fired. Only small leaf grades are possible from this type of manufacture.
- 2.4.7 LTP - Tea for which the Lawrie Tea Processor has been employed during the manufacturing process. This machine macerates withered leaf by cutting and beating with steel knives and beaters. Only a few final grades similar to CTC grades are produced.
- 2.4.8 Orthodox - Tea which has been manufactured mainly using the conventional (orthodox) rollers fitted with battens or cones or both.
- 2.4.9 Rotorvane - Process in which the withered leaf is minced thus breaking the cells more effectively and accelerating the fermentation. A high percentage of small leaf grades could be extracted utilising this process of manufacture.
- 2.4.10 Break - A quantitative term, referring to a known number of packages, usually in multiples of 20, of the same grade of made tea from one Invoice.
- 2.4.11 Invoice - Relates to a specific reference number for a given break of tea at the time of packing on the estate. Different grades of tea may have the same invoice number.

#### APPENDIX A

#### GRADES OF SRI LANKA TFAS

##### A.1 LEAF

##### A.1.1 FOP - Flowery orange pekoe

Long twisted wiry leaf with some tip.

##### A.1.2 OP - Orange pekoe

Similar in make and style to FOP but without any tip.

##### A.1.3 OP A - Orange pekoe A

Loosely twisted, bold leaf; similar in size to normal OP grade but inferior in appearance.

A.1.4 FP - Flowery pekoe

Shotty, even well-made grade with or without tip, but neat and clean.

A.1.5 PEK - Pekoe

More open and less shotty than an FP.

A.2 BROKENS

A.2.1 FBOP - Flowery broken orange pekoe

Well twisted, but smaller in size than an OP, with some show of tip.

A.2.2 BOP 1 - Broken orange pekoe 1

Well twisted, leafier than a BOP, but not as leafy as an OP.

A.2.3 BOP - Broken orange pekoe

Well twisted, medium size broken grade without excessive stalk.

A.2.4 BOP A - Broken orange pekoe A

A secondary BOP with less make and style which could contain more stalk than a BOP.

A.2.5 BP 1 - Broken pekoe 1

Choppy in style, fairly even and clean.

A.2.6 BP - Broken pekoe

Inferior in make and style to a BP 1, also contains more stalk.

A.2.7 BM - Broken mixed

A mixed grade with open flaky leaf and a fair percentage of stalk and fibre.

A.2.8 BT - Broken tea

Very uneven and mixed with a reasonably high percentage of stalk and fibre and could also contain some dust.

A.3 FANNINGS

A.3.1 FBOPF - Flowery broken orange pekoe fannings

Leafier than a BOPF and contains a fair show of small tip.

**A.3.2 FBOPF 1 - Flowery broken orange pekoe fannings 1**

Leafier than a FBOPF with a reasonable show of tip.

**A.3.3 FBOPF special - Flowery broken orange pekoe fannings special**

Fairly well twisted and leafier in style than on FBOPF 1 and containing an attractive show of long tip.

**A.3.4 FBOPF extra special - Flowery broken orange pekoe fannings - extra special**

A grade with an attractive show of silver or golden tip with little or no black leaf.

**A.3.5 BOPF - Broken orange pekoe fannings**

Smaller than a BOP grade, fairly well made clean and even in size.

**A.3.6 PF - Pekoe fannings**

Flakier in style than a BOPF and could contain more fibre.

**A.3.7 FNGS - Fannings**

Inferior to a PF, containing more fibre and mixed in style.

**A.3.8 FNGS A - Fannings A**

More mixed than a FNGS, with a higher percentage of stalk and fibre and could contain some dust.

**A.4 DUSTS**

**A.4.1 Dust 1**

Smaller than a BOPF, even and grainy, quite clean.

**A.4.2 Dust**

Similar in size to a Dust 1 but not as black and contains more fibre.

**A.4.3 Dust 2**

A powdery grade with a fair percentage of fibre.





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## **SRI LANKA STANDARDS INSTITUTION**

The Sri Lanka Standards Institution (SLSI) is the National Standards Organization of Sri Lanka established under the Sri Lanka Standards Institution Act No. 6 of 1984 which repealed and replaced the Bureau of Ceylon Standards Act No. 38 of 1964. The Institution functions under the Ministry of Science & Technology.

The principal objects of the Institution as set out in the Act are to prepare standards and promote their adoption, to provide facilities for examination and testing of products, to operate a Certification Marks Scheme, to certify the quality of products meant for local consumption or exports and to promote standardization and quality control by educational, consultancy and research activity.

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