

DINING

It's in the Leaves

FORGET FRILLY TEA cozies and flowered china. The Tea Cellar in Washington, D.C., is a sleek zen oasis where power brokers meet to sip teas that are aged (and priced) like fine wines. The spot boasts the first aging cellar for rare Pu-Erh tea in the U.S. (Pu-Erh teas are all grown in China, where they are aged in caves.) Though named the Tea Cellar, the room is actually on ground level, bathed in sunlight. Banish winter blues by settling into a booth next to the soaring windows—or if you prefer to be seen but not heard, choose one of four private tables enclosed by glass walls.

With more than 50 types of tea, the menu may seem daunting. But trained tea expert Ardina Kievits is an enthusiastic guide. She offers three tea “flights” for guests who want an in-depth tasting, and will even help you create your own custom flight. Tea is served in clear glass pots, with water added at-table, so you can watch your brew swirl and dance as the leaves unfurl. Outstanding choices include Royal Keemun Hoa Ya’A, the black tea favored by the Queen of England; white teas like the ethereal Royal Himalayan Snowflake (with 500 mg of antioxidants per pot); oolong tea aged in the skin of a pomelo (an Asian citrus fruit); or the rare, cave-aged Pu-Erh teas from “vintages” as far back as 1949.

While a pot of less rarified tea can cost as little as \$6, the most expensive—1985 Pu-Erh Royal Reserve, hand-carried out of China after five years of negotiation—is \$300 per pot.

In a nod to tradition, you can still satisfy your sweet tooth with refined, house-made interpretations of teatime treats—scones, madeleines, tarts, and cookies—served from a buffet (\$12). This winter, Kievits has plans to add an authentic Moroccan tea service, as well as Argentine maté, sipped the traditional way, through a *bombilla*, or metal straw.

—Gayle Keck

HAVE A CUPPA

**The Tea Cellar
Park Hyatt
Washington**
24th and M Streets,
NW; 202/419-6755;
afternoon tea served
2:30–4:30 daily;
teas also sold for
home use.



STYLE

Warm Up

FOR THE FREQUENT flyer who has everything, check out the plush Jet Set kit from Johnstons cashmere—a blanket, socks, and pillowslip all tucked into a matching drawstring bag. The prized material is manufactured in Johnstons’ own mills in Scotland, the only remaining independent, fully vertical mill in the United Kingdom. Esteemed pedigree aside, the cashmere’s superb—think supersoft—quality is what makes this travel kit so enticing. Not surprising, since Johnstons’ knits are softened in the same water that’s used to produce some of the world’s finest whiskeys. \$700, johnstonscashmere.com.

—Jeanne Kalosieh



FROM LEFT: COURTESY PARK HYATT (2); COURTESY JOHNSTONS CASHMERE; OPPOSITE: NICK DEWAR