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# Tea can be cool, we promise. Here are the best ways to enjoy a cup in D.C.

By **Stephenie Overman** May 22

Behind water, tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world. (Take that, Team Coffee!) And locally it seems there's a tea revolution brewing as well: Back in March, Annapolis-born Capital Teas received \$5 million in investment funding, which it plans to put toward its expansion in D.C. and beyond. Still not convinced tea can be cool? Here are five ways to enjoy tasty brews in the area, from the traditional to the novel.

## Have It: Set to Music

*Afternoon Tea at the Mansion at Strathmore, 10701 Rockville Pike, North Bethesda; Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays on occasion, 1 p.m., \$24; 301-581-5108, [strathmore.org](http://strathmore.org). (Grosvenor)*

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When you take afternoon tea in the Shapiro Music Room in the Mansion at Strathmore, “you feel like you’re stepping back in time,” says tearoom manager Mary Mendoza Godbout. Local musicians (pianists, flutists) play in the dark-paneled, high-ceilinged room.

The menu includes tea sandwiches and scones, with a tea especially made for Strathmore by master tea blender John Harney of Connecticut, Mendoza Godbout says, describing the blend as “black tea, not heavy, gentle on the caffeine and very tasty with a good aroma.”

### **Have It: At a Party**

*Vintage Glam Tea Party & Co.,*

[vintageglamteapartydc.com](http://vintageglamteapartydc.com), coming soon to 137 Kennedy St. NW

If you want the full fascinators-and-gloves experience, Robin Hickman is your gal. The owner of Vintage Glam Tea Party & Co. specializes in full-service tea parties at a location you provide, complete with china, silverware, food and an on-site hostess.

“I go overboard,” Hickman says. “It’s pretty, frilly, girlie, a lot of flowers and a lot of pink.” Hickman plans to open a consignment shop at the end of May that includes an upstairs room available for party rentals.

### **Have It: In Your Cocktails**

Capital Teas’ alcohol enhancers, available locally at all seven locations and at [capitalteas.com](http://capitalteas.com).

Hold the lime: A better way to upgrade your Corona is with Capitol Teas’ Tea Lager Beer Enhancers (\$5 for a pack of six bags). The leaves are blended to offset beer’s natural bitterness and produce a smoother, more balanced finish.

“You get a beer that has less bite and tastes like a pleasant

cocktail,” says Capital Teas CEO Peter Martino.

Designed to be brewed in cold beer for five to 10 minutes, the blends include Cream Earl Grey Black (best with Blue Moon), Invigorating Mint Mate (perfect with Red Stripe) and Harbor Breeze, made with hibiscus (which pairs well with any lager).

Martino and his crew also offer Vino Teanos, which — you guessed it — are meant to be brewed in wine (\$5 for a pack of six bags), as well as TeaTeani liquor mix-ins (\$21.50 for 6 ounces of loose leaves).

### **Have It: In a Hidden Tea Den**

*Chado Urasenke Washington D.C. Association, 1819 L St. NW, Suite 220; [tankokaidc.org](http://tankokaidc.org). (Farragut North)*

An L Street office building seems an unlikely place to take part in a centuries-old ritual. Yet that’s where the Chado Urasenke Center has built a Japanese chashitsu, or tearoom that practices the ceremonial preparation of matcha tea. Before participating in the elaborate service, guests are encouraged to wash their hands in a low stone water basin outside of the tea room to symbolically purify themselves of the dust of the everyday world.

You can take part in the tradition at various times Tuesdays through Saturdays (a \$35 yearly membership fee is required, plus \$25 per service).

### **Have It: With a Massage**

*House of Steep, 3800 Lee Highway, Suite D, Arlington; 703-567-1589, [houseofsteep.com](http://houseofsteep.com).*

The tea menu at House of Steep is extensive, with various types of black, oolong, green and white, plus healthy blends with soothing names like “Brighten,” “Cleanse,” “Uplift” and “Vitality.”

But the other menu is even more tempting, the one for the “foot sanctuary” in the back of the tea shop. That menu includes reflexology, foot massages and foot soaks with ingredients like bergamot tea, mint, lemon grass, pine, catnip, dandelion and frankincense.

“I wanted to create a place where people could relax that was bigger than just a place to drink tea,” owner Lyndsey DePalma says.