



# Myanmar – EU Trade Helpdesk



## Myanmar Product Profile: Fermented Tea

### Myanmar Fermented Tea

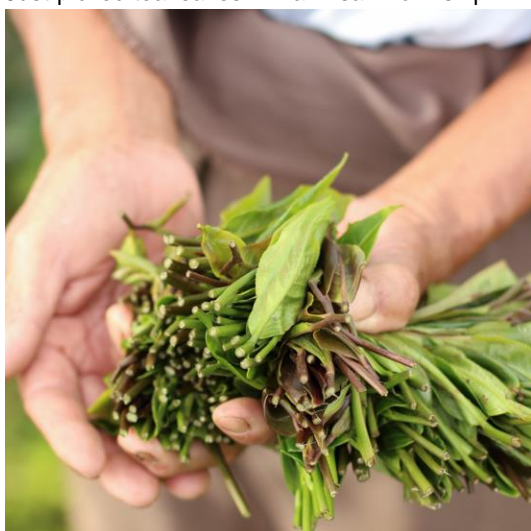
Myanmar fermented tea is said to have enormous health benefits, due to its high amounts of antioxidants. It is made when green tea leaves are put through a natural lacto-fermentation process. This increases the level of polyphenols and probiotics that are beneficial to gastrointestinal health.

Fermented tea in Myanmar (*laphet*) was traditionally served only in royal ceremonies as a symbol of peace. Today it is eaten everywhere in Myanmar. The tea dish is associated with national pride and praised for its health benefits. It is also called “lord leaves” and “lord medicine”.

### Why You Should Buy from Myanmar

- **Fermented tea from Myanmar is an innovative product** on the market of the European Union (EU), fully in line with top health food trends.
- **Fermented tea has a high polyphenol content**, which has many health benefits (studies by Maung 2012 and He 2017).
- **Fermented Myanmar tea contains double the amount of flavonoids of fresh tea leaves** (Maung and He 2013).
- **Six different ‘good’ bacteria are involved in the fermentation process**, aiding the digestive system and controlling bile and mucus.

Just-picked tea leaves in Namhsan Township



Source: Kate Leahy

### Production Data

A large number of small and marginal farmers, especially those living in the hilly regions of Myanmar, depend on tea for their livelihood. According to the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (UMFCCI), commercial cultivation of tea in the Shan State and Chin State accounts for 90% of total tea production. The remaining 10% of production takes place in Sagaing, Mandalay, and Magway Regions and in Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, and Mon State. Within the Shan State, the main areas producing fermented tea leaves are Namhsan, Pindaya and Yatsauk townships.

15 to 20% of the total fresh tea leaves production in Myanmar is used to produce fermented tea. Fermented tea leaves are produced with traditional methods. Tea leaves are selected to go through the fermentation process. This involves steaming for about five minutes, removing the remaining water, selecting tea leaves again, packing them into clay pots, and pressing the leaves with heavy weights. The fermentation process is monitored at regular intervals.

The tea leaves are well-fermented by naturally forming bacteria. The pulp softens after two weeks and the fermentation process is completed within three to four months. The completion of fermentation is evident when the pulp changes from green to golden green, the leaves soften, and acidity is reduced. The phenolic compounds found in fermented tea give it its unique flavour.

Tea leaves before steaming



Source: Kate Leahy

After fermentation, the tea leaves are used to make laphet salad. The leaves are covered with water, massaged gently, and drained well.

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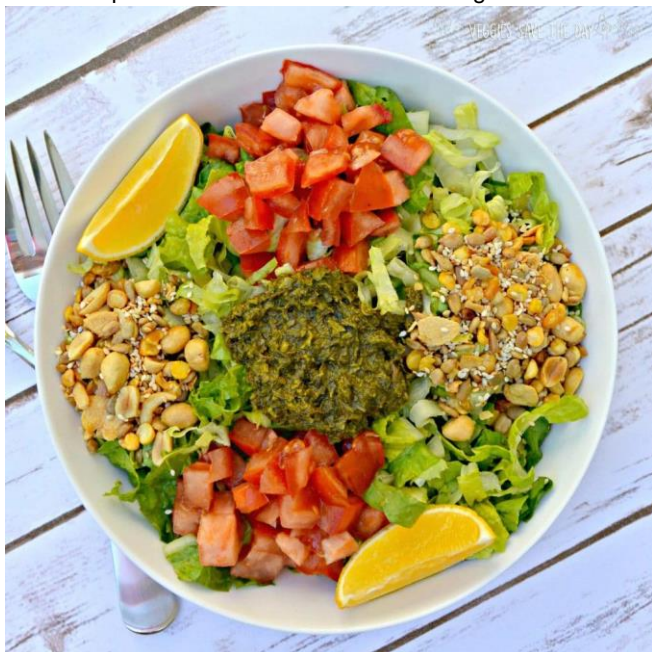


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The fermented tea leaves are then thoroughly mixed with 5 to 10% of minced garlic and ground chilli, 1 to 2% of salt, 1 to 2% of fresh lemon juice, 1% of seasoning powder and 20 to 30% of peanut oil. A tasty laphet salad is the final result.

Burma Superstar tea leaf salad before mixing



Source: Veggies save the day

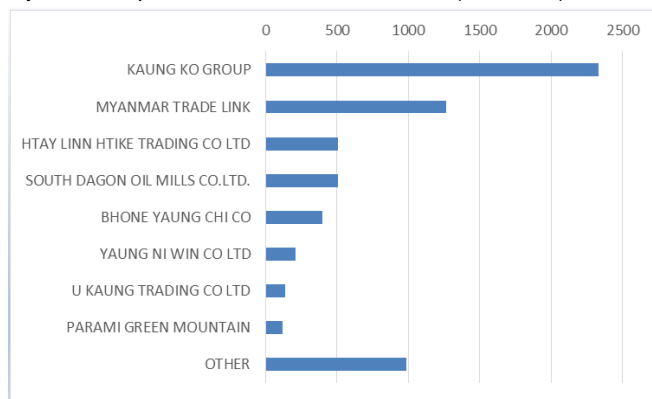
Fermented tea leaves are also used in curry dishes. In addition, innovative Myanmar producers have started to produce fermented tea relishes and spreads.

## Export Structure and Companies

In 2017, more than 50 companies exported fermented tea leaves from Myanmar, with exports reaching over 4,000 tonnes. The main export destinations are China and Thailand. Exports to the EU started growing due to the increasing popularity of Myanmar cuisine, especially in the United Kingdom.

Before export, the quality of the fermented tea is checked. There are five grades of pickled tea based on the quality of the tea leaves. Some of the attributes used to grade the fermented tea are the maturity of leaves, appearance of buds and top two leaves, size of leaves, and region of origin. Premium quality pickled teas are sold to retailers as pickled tea sprouts either with or without brand names.

Myanmar export of fermented tea in 2017 (in tonnes)



Source: Myanmar Ministry of Commerce, 2018

## Government and Support Organisations

There are several organisations and projects in Myanmar supporting the tea sector. Some of the relevant organisations and projects are:

- Myanmar Tea Producer and Exporters Association: The association represents tea farmers, processors, and traders. Its aim is to improve the Myanmar tea industry. The main mandates are capacity building and cooperation and networking among the value chain actors.
- Strengthening Capacities of the Private Sector: Since 2013, the German Government's [Private Sector Development Programme](#) has supported the tea value chain in Myanmar.
- [Trade Development Programme \(TDP\)](#): Funded by the EU and co-funded by the German Government, the programme supports tea exporters by providing market information, promoting Myanmar products in the EU, and organising national booths at leading EU trade fairs.

### Contact:

Myanmar – EU Trade Helpdesk  
Ministry of Commerce  
No. 228-240 Strand Road, second floor  
Yangon, Myanmar  
Email: [mmeu.tradehelpdesk@gmail.com](mailto:mmeu.tradehelpdesk@gmail.com)

*This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the author (Aleksandar Jovanovic) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or any other party.*

July 2018

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