



Production and processing of selected beverage crops



Honey bush tea

- The requirements, production and processing methods for black tea and coffee differ from those of other teas (i.e. honeybush tea, rooibos, bush tea, etc.).
- Honey bush tea, rooibos tea and bush tea are characterised by their unique occurrences in nature, including specific climatic requirements and their special therapeutic properties.

Step 1: Planting



Seedlings on seedbeds before transplanting

- Although bush tea and honey bush tea are mostly harvested from the wild, planting is done using two basic methods, i.e. by sowing the seeds directly in plantations or by seedlings.
- (At the production end are the large estates [commercial farmers] and small-holdings [emerging farmers]).



Rooibos tea processing facilities

Step 2: Harvesting

- The harvested leaves must reach the factory fresh and within hours of picking for processing.
- Two methods of harvesting are hand picking (selective) which demands more labour, and machine picking (not selective).

Step 3: Processing

- The first step in tea processing is to ensure that the tea is wetted thoroughly, placed on a cement slab and bruised. The tea is then fermented for 8 to 24 hours, this process is essential for the development of each tea's characteristic sweet scent, taste and colour.
- Finally, the tea is spread out and allowed to dry in the sun (still on the cement slab, like the coffee drying patio) before being sifted and bagged or packed.



Grading of rooibos tea according to particles size

Step 4: Grading

- Before packaging and blending, the tea is graded into different categories, e.g. Super, Choice, Standard, etc., i.e. is graded according to particle size.
- As part of grading, the tea is also evaluated according to taste, flavour and colour.



Stored rooibos tea

Step 5: Packaging and blending

- The different grades are then stored separately and finally bagged or put into the tea chests.
- The buyers then take the tea, package and blend it to the flavour and characteristics that are consistent with their brands.
- The tea is subjected to a microbiological test before being marketed to the consumers.

Further information can be obtained from:

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