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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FLAVOUR PROFILE DURING WILTING OF TEA LEAVES

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The flavour of tea is known to be due to the combination of more than three hundred compounds, but it is widely recognised that a group of about ten compounds are most important in determining the flavour of tea. The wilting (withering) of tea leaves is the first important stage in black tea manufacture. Many of the physical and chemical changes that take place during wilting have a strong influence on the character of the final product.

It has been observed that tea leaves develop a pleasant fruity odour during wilting. In this investigation we have studied the changes in volatile compounds during wilting process. Data obtained clearly shows that compounds such as linalool, 1–octen–3–ol, geraniol, phenyl acetaldehyde and methyl salicylate increase during wilting. These changes are reflected in the flavour profiles of the final product. The significance of these changes and the possible mechanisms for these increases will be discussed.