

TEA TIME

Meet the Southampton couple behind **Plain-T**, a line of teas packed with health benefits and a natural tick repellent. BY MICHELE SHAPIRO

Whether your goal is to ward off certain cancers, reduce stroke risk or simply clear up your skin, there's a tea for that. Tathiana Teixeira, a former professional ballet dancer, first experienced the benefits of tea early on in her 15-year career. "Many dancers aren't healthy. They smoke, drink lots of coffee and don't eat nutritious foods," admits the 43-year-old, who—more than a decade ago—started the boutique tea brand Plain-T with her husband, Alessandro, a former pro tennis player. "I was having trouble with my veins because I had poor circulation, and the doctors wanted to operate when I was 23." To avoid having to go under the knife, Tathiana stopped drinking coffee for six months and instead drank only green tea, which studies have found helps unclog arteries. "It improved my blood flow," she recalls, "and I no longer needed surgery."

The couple, both of whom were born and raised in Brazil, have since devoted their lives to educating others about what Alessandro, 47, who goes by Alex, calls the secret truth about tea. "There are a lot of misconceptions out there. People think tea is just Lipton or Twinings. They don't understand the potential health benefits."

After two and a half years of researching, studying the tea plant industry and enlisting a European tea master to help them source the purest teas from family-owned gardens around the world ("we're in tune with the environment and the labor practices at the gardens from which we source," says Alex), the couple launched Plain-T in New York City, where they lived at the time, when Tathiana was pregnant with their daughter Maya, now 12. "The first sale of what I call our 100-percent orthodox teas was to Sant Ambroeus in Southampton," says Alex. "We felt the Hamptons would be an amazing test market for us, because the customer base is picky." His instincts were right: In the decade since, a host of local venues—including Pierre's, Tutto Il Giorno, Duryea's Lobster Deck, Le Bilboquet and Provisions—have added Plain-T to their menus, and Tate's Bake Shop is the exclusive seller of the company's line of small-batch iced tea, which is both sugar and preservative-free.

By the time the couple's second child, Luma, now 7, was born, they'd moved themselves and their business to the Hamptons.

The couple had the East End in mind when they began adding Cistus, a natural tick repellent sourced from Greece, to several of their Wellness & Detox teas. "Cistus doesn't only repel ticks—it helps boost the immune system," says Tathiana. She

boasts that her family has been tick-free since they started drinking the Cistus-infused teas two years ago. "And the kids didn't catch one cold this past winter." The key, she adds, is consistency: "You have to drink at least one cup every day."

The next phase of the business is e-commerce. A Plain-T website (plain-t.com) offering both orthodox teas (\$14-\$40 for a 2-ounce bag) and a new line of Wellness & Detox teas (\$15-\$20 for a 2-ounce bag), including those with Cistus, launched in late July.

While the site's launch has kept the entrepreneurial couple even busier than usual this summer, they do take time for an occasional day at Cryder Beach in Southampton. Thanks to their teas, their whole family has been enjoying it in good health. 🌿

Plain-T's antioxidant-rich powdered matcha tea.

