

Examining Information Architecture: Empire Coffee & Tea and The Cultured Cup

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This document presents the analysis of the information architecture of both the Empire Coffee & Tea and The Cultured Cup websites.

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IAKM 60101: Information Architecture I

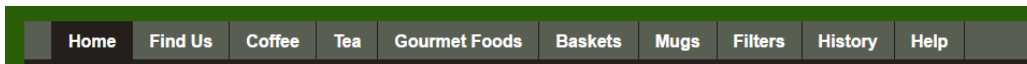
Empire Coffee & Tea

Primary Organization Scheme

Empire Coffee & Tea website uses a top down organization system with a hybrid organization scheme.

Main Navigation

The top navigation bar utilizes a topical organization scheme with headings such as coffee, tea, gourmet foods and mugs, as well as, task scheme with the addition of the find us heading.



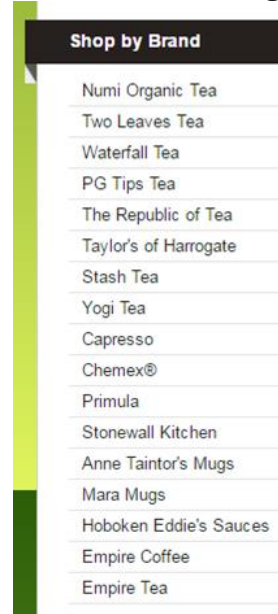
Left Side Navigation

Like the main navigation menu, the top left side navigation menu also uses topical organization with items divided into categories. The bottom left side navigation menu employs an exact organization system, offering the user the option to select their product by brand.

Top Left Navigation



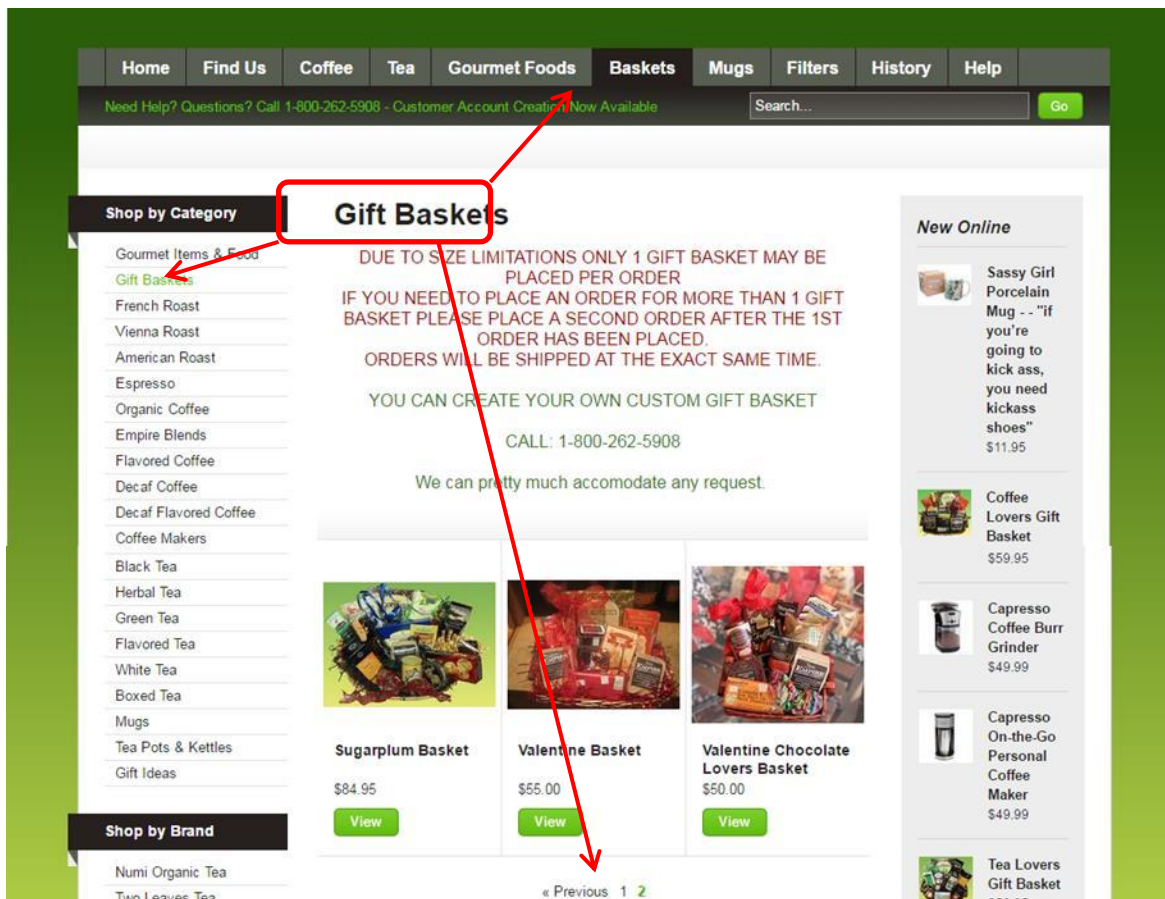
Bottom Left Navigation



Where Am I?

When navigating through the site, there are three ways a user can determine where they are within the site.

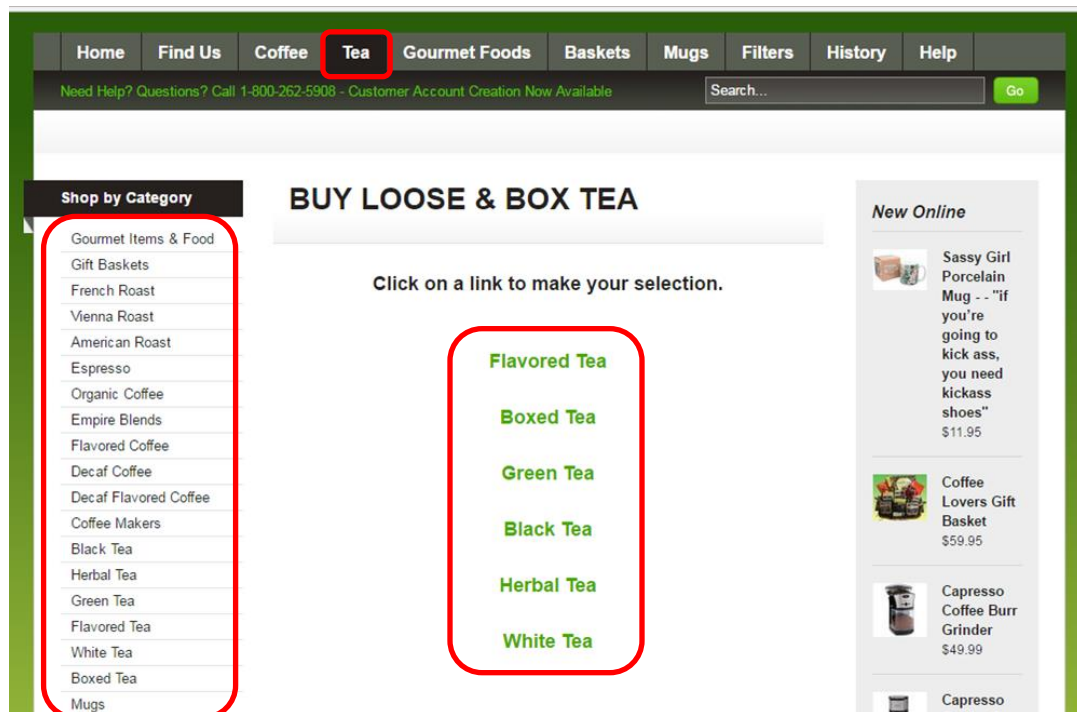
- **Main Navigation Menu:** As you navigate through the site, the category title in the main navigation area changes color when you are on a page related to that category. As you can see in the screen shot below, the “Baskets” category changed from grey to black indicating your presence on the gift baskets page.
- **Side Navigation Menu:** The side navigation menu also categorizes items. In the example below, you can see that the “Gift Baskets” category changes from black lettering to green lettering when you navigate to the gift baskets page.
- **Bottom Page Indicator:** When you navigate to an area that has products listed on more than one page, a page indicator shows at the bottom of the page. As with the other pages, the writing is in black until you navigate to a page, at which point it turns green indicating which page you are currently on.



How Do I Get To?

When a user is interested in navigating to a particular category to view all of the products within the category, there are three ways for them to accomplish their goal.

- **Main Navigation Menu:** Many broad product categories like tea and coffee are listed in the main navigation menu at the top of the page. Some of these headings will take you directly to a page with related products.
- **Side Navigation Menu:** More specific product categories are listed in the side navigation menu, both by category and brand. Utilizing any of these links take the user directly to the page of the site listing all of the products in the desired category.
- **In Category Navigation:** If the user utilizes the main top navigation menu to access a category, in some cases they will be taken directly to the product listing page, and in others (like the example shown below) they will be taken to a secondary category listing further defining their selection options.



How Do I See?

From a specific product page, there are three ways to navigate back to view all of the product listings in a category.

- **Browser Back Button:** As with any page, the user can always tap the browsers back button until they return to the main category page.
- **Left Side Navigation:** Clicking the desired category within the left side navigation menu will return a user to the main category page.
- **In Product Link:** Some, but not all, product pages have a link within the listing that will navigate you back to the main category page.

Shop by Category

Gourmet Items & Food

Gift baskets

French Roast

Vienna Roast

American Roast

Espresso

Organic Coffee

Empire Blends

Flavored Coffee

Decaf Coffee

Decaf Flavored Coffee

Coffee Makers

Black Tea

Herbal Tea

Green Tea

Flavored Tea

White Tea

Boxed Tea

Mugs

Tea Pots & Kettles

Gift Ideas

Coffee Lovers Gift Basket

\$39.95

Basket Includes The Following:
3 Half Pound Bags of Coffee
Rademaker Chocolate Sticks
Pirouline Cream Wafers
Lucious Belgian Truffles
Pastille Candy Tin
Lady Waltons Creamy Cookie
Walkers Shortbread



View all our Gift Basket Selections

Note: To fill and ship the gift basket promptly, similar product of equal or greater value and quality will be substituted when listed items are unavailable. Displayed photograph is for illustration purposes only.

Due to size limitations only 1 gift basket may be placed per order. If you need to place an order for more than 1 gift basket please place a second

New Online

 Sassy Girl Porcelain Mug -- "if you're going to kick ass, you need kickass shoes"
\$11.95

 Coffee Lovers Gift Basket
\$59.95

 Capresso Coffee Burr Grinder
\$49.99

 Capresso On-the-Go Personal Coffee Maker

What's Not Good?

When evaluating the site's home page, there are a few areas that stand out as being potential problems affecting the site's overall structure and function:

Main Navigation Menu: Could be simplified to a strictly topical based scheme by changing the title of the "Find Us" heading to Locations.

Mouseovers: The navigation menus do not contain mouseovers so the user can't see what exactly they can find in each category. This leaves them guessing as to where the information they desire can be found if they don't immediately associate it with one of the available headings.

Overall Visual Design: The design itself can be somewhat distracting. For example, the cart icon at the top of the page appears to be a photo that was added to the site, and contains a white background that does not match the sites overall green background.

Main Content Area Content: There is a video at the top of the page. It gives the impression that you will be presented with some type of information about the product, company, or page, but when clicked is merely a slideshow of products that neither explain anything nor provide the ability to navigate to any of the products you may find interesting within the slideshow.

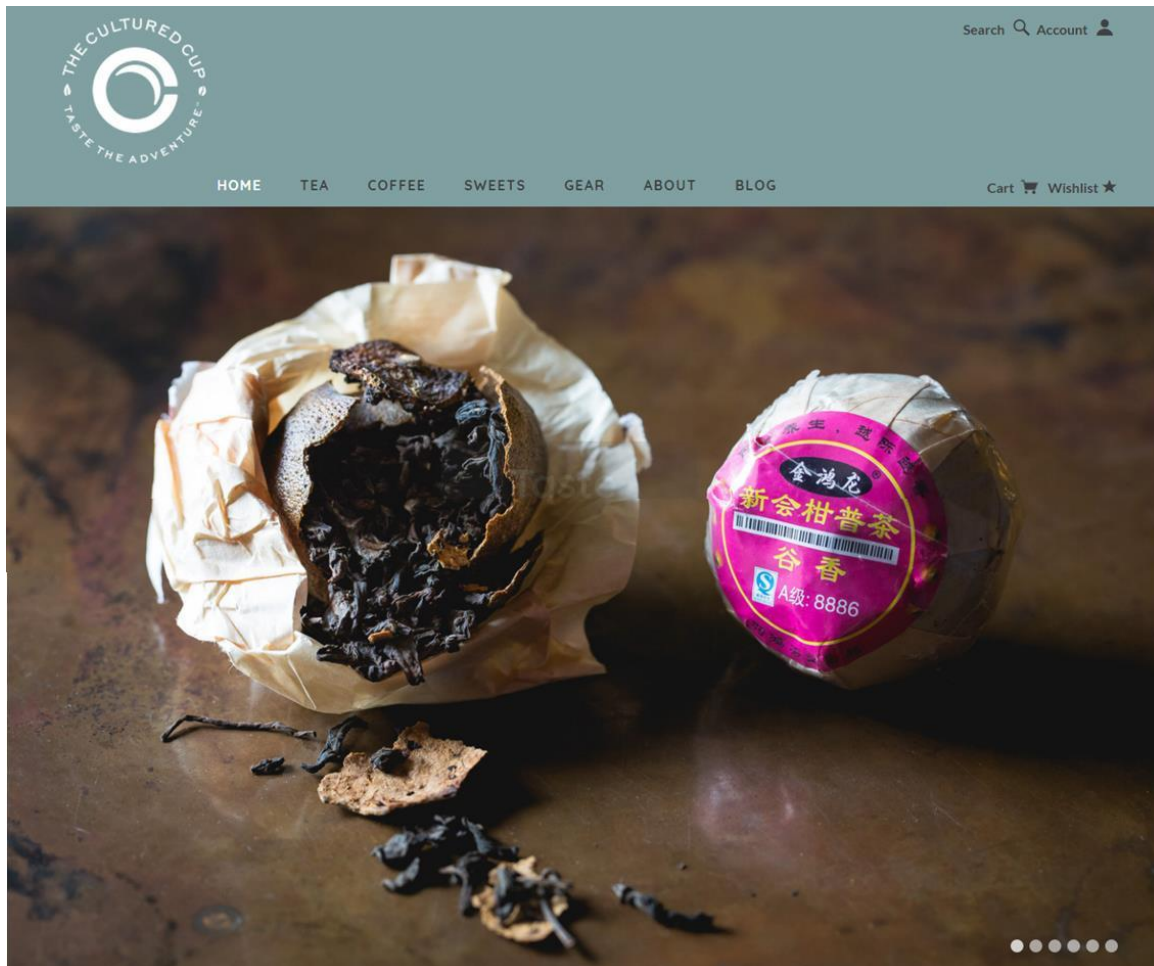
Main Content Area Labeling and Hierarchy: The labeling and hierarchy on the home page is lacking in the middle section. There is a quote at the top of the section that leaves you wondering if it is or is not related to the video below it. It isn't. You are then presented with a "Family Fun Basket" title and picture which appears to be a featured product, but isn't labeled signifying its importance. The third item you are presented with is a grouping of "Buy Coffee" and "Buy Tea" links despite the fact that these areas are already presented in both broad and specific headers in three other areas within the page. Additionally, all of these areas appear to be grouped together due to their spacing and lack of headers or titles despite the fact that they are unrelated.

Footer: There are three areas for information presented. One of the areas was never designed leaving the template wording in place. This could affect the users trust in the company as it shows a lack of care and consideration to the presence of the company and product, leaving the user wondering if the same lack of care is present in other areas of the company or their processes.

The Cultured Cup

Primary Organization

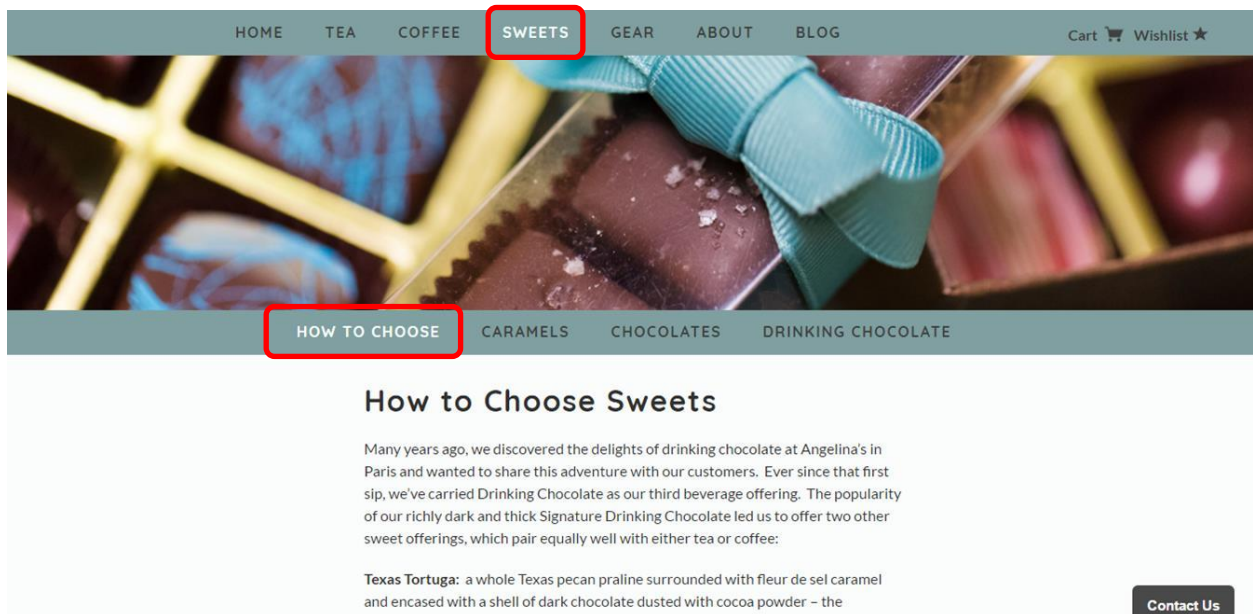
The Cultured Cup website uses a top down organization system with an ambiguous main organization scheme where the information is divided into various topic based categories.



Where Am I?

Once a user chooses to navigate to various topic areas, there are two ways they can determine where they are located within the site.

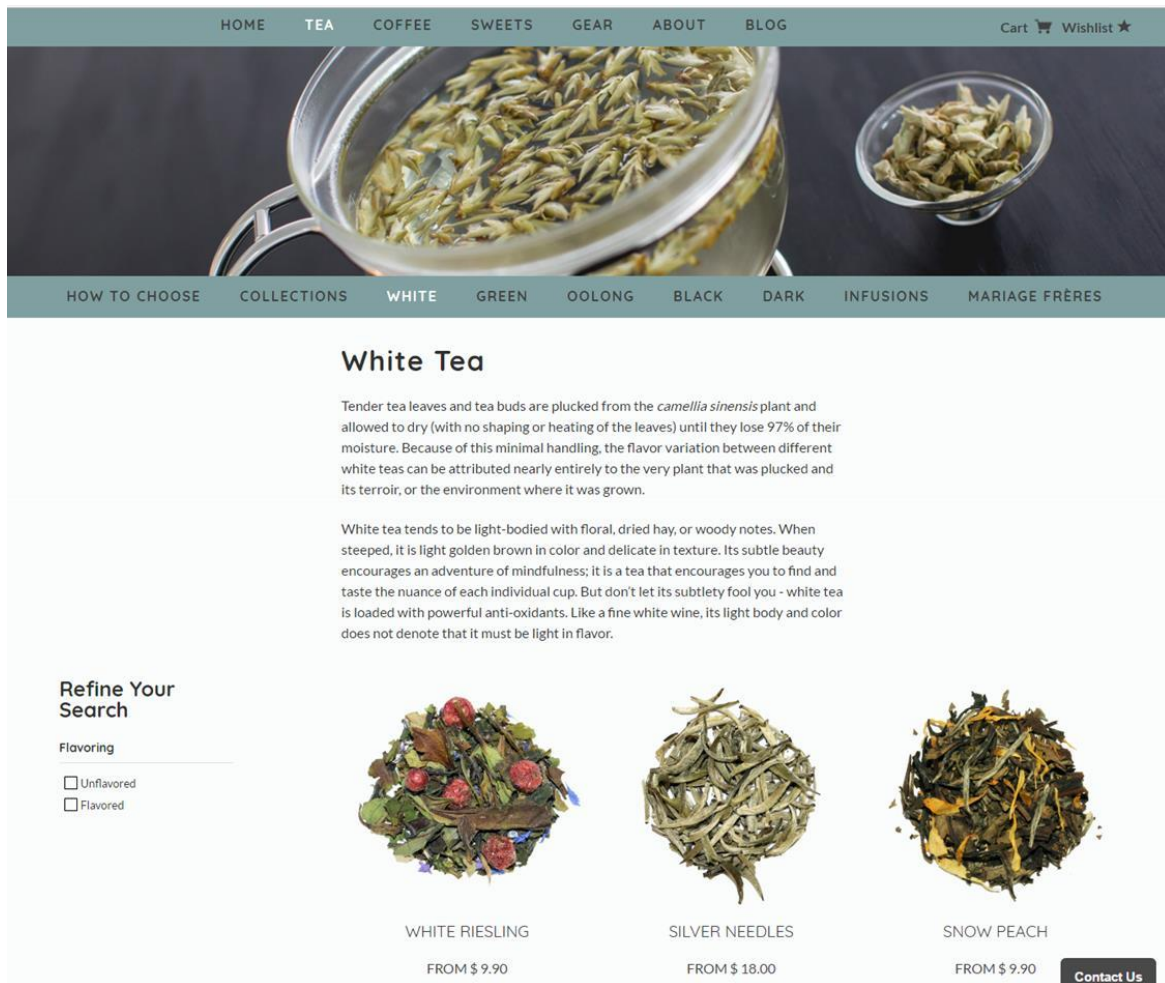
- **Main Navigation Menu:** When you click on a heading within the main navigation menu, you are redirected to the topic specific page. As you can see in the example below, the font color of the topic you are viewing changes to white, differentiating it from the other topic headings.
- **Topic Page Navigation Menu:** Each topic page shows both the main navigation menu and a topic specific menu. Like the main navigation menu, when you are viewing a specific area within the topic page the heading for that area turns white signifying where you are located.



How Do I Get To?

When a user is interested in navigating to a particular category to view all of the products within the category, there are three ways for them to accomplish their goal.

- **Main Navigation Menu:** The three main product categories (tea, coffee, and sweets) are listed in the main navigation menu at the top of the page. Clicking on these headings will take you to the product specific page at which point the category specific navigation menu can be utilized to view the available products.
- **In Category Navigation:** Once the user clicks on a heading in the main navigation menu they are redirected to the desired category page. A category specific menu is presented allowing the user to select and view the available products within each category.
- **Refining Search:** More specific viewing of products can be accomplished by utilizing the refine your search option to the left side of the product page. For example, this allows the user to transition from the broader “White Tea” category to more specifically view “Unflavored White Tea”.



The screenshot shows a website's product page for White Tea. At the top, a navigation bar includes links for HOME, TEA, COFFEE, SWEETS, GEAR, ABOUT, and BLOG. On the right of the navigation bar are links for Cart and Wishlist. Below the navigation bar is a large hero image showing a glass teapot filled with white tea leaves and a small glass bowl containing more tea leaves. Below the hero image is a secondary navigation bar with links: HOW TO CHOOSE, COLLECTIONS, WHITE, GREEN, OOLONG, BLACK, DARK, INFUSIONS, and MARIAGE FRÈRES. The main content area is titled "White Tea" and contains two paragraphs of descriptive text. Below the text is a "Refine Your Search" section with a "Flavoring" filter that has two options: "Unflavored" and "Flavored". To the right of the filter are three product images: "WHITE RIESLING", "SILVER NEEDLES", and "SNOW PEACH". Each product image is accompanied by its name and a price starting from \$9.90. A "Contact Us" button is located at the bottom right of the product grid.

HOME TEA COFFEE SWEETS GEAR ABOUT BLOG Cart Wishlist

HOW TO CHOOSE COLLECTIONS WHITE GREEN OOLONG BLACK DARK INFUSIONS MARIAGE FRÈRES

White Tea

Tender tea leaves and tea buds are plucked from the *camellia sinensis* plant and allowed to dry (with no shaping or heating of the leaves) until they lose 97% of their moisture. Because of this minimal handling, the flavor variation between different white teas can be attributed nearly entirely to the very plant that was plucked and its terroir, or the environment where it was grown.

White tea tends to be light-bodied with floral, dried hay, or woody notes. When steeped, it is light golden brown in color and delicate in texture. Its subtle beauty encourages an adventure of mindfulness; it is a tea that encourages you to find and taste the nuance of each individual cup. But don't let its subtlety fool you - white tea is loaded with powerful anti-oxidants. Like a fine white wine, its light body and color does not denote that it must be light in flavor.

Refine Your Search

Flavoring

☐ Unflavored
☐ Flavored



WHITE RIESLING
FROM \$ 9.90



SILVER NEEDLES
FROM \$ 18.00



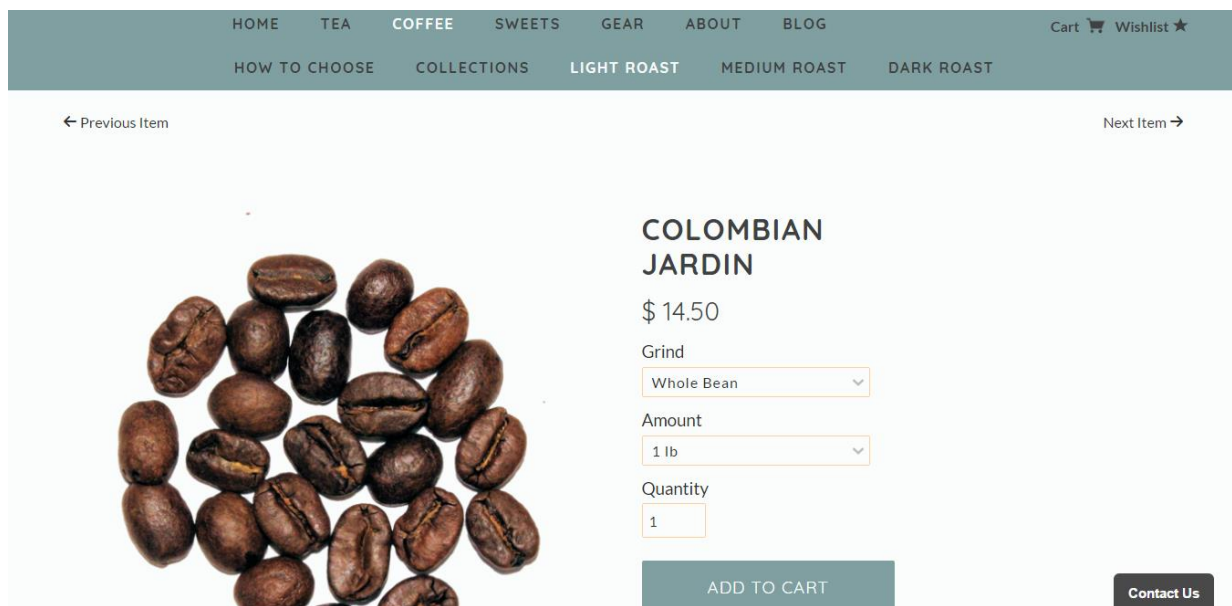
SNOW PEACH
FROM \$ 9.90

Contact Us

How Do I See?

From a specific product page, there are three ways to navigate back to view all of the product listings in a category.

- **Browser Back Button:** As with any page, the user can always tap the browsers back button until they return to the main category page.
- **Main Navigation:** Clicking the broader category header in the main navigation menu will redirect the user to the category home page.
- **In Category Navigation:** As you can see in the example below, both the main and category specific navigation menus are shown at the top of a product page. If a user wanted to navigate back to a specific area within the category specific navigation they would be able to do so by clicking the heading in that menu.



What's Not Good?

When evaluating the site's home page, there are a few areas that stand out as being potential problems affecting the site's overall structure and function:

Mouseovers: There are no mouseovers in the menus so the user can't see what exactly they can find in each category. This leaves them guessing as to where the information they desire can be found if they don't immediately associate it with one of the available headings.

Headings: The heading "Gear" could be confusing to the user. This word could mean many things to various people. Will you find toothed wheels, clothes, equipment, or something else entirely in this area? What you do in fact find are various types of equipment used to prepare, store and serve the products found on the site.

Content Functionality: There is a nice slideshow of pictures presented under the main navigation menu. These pictures show various products available on the site. You can wait and watch them scroll by, grab and swipe them to navigate through them, or click on the small circles at the bottom of the pictures to scroll through them. The issue I see with this area is that that is the same tactic employed by many sites that are displaying current news and featured information. These photos are typically clickable, however on this site they are not which could frustrate the user.

Search Function: The search function doesn't always provide the most useful results, potentially resulting in a bit of scrolling to discover the item you want. When searching for something basic like black tea, it randomly returns results of a combination of tea samplers, loose tea, tea brewing accessories and articles in seemingly no particular order.

Hierarchy: The main page hierarchy seems a bit off. While the main navigation is where you'd expect, as you scroll further down the page beneath the pictures that can't be clicked, you are presented with a grouping of "current or new" news/information/items, then the notice that you can receive free shipping with orders over \$75, a small information area about the sites founder and then featured products. It seems as though these are ill prioritized.