International Traveler: Coffee, Teas, Honey, Nuts, and Spices

Last Modified:

The United States restricts or prohibits the entry of many agricultural products, which can carry foreign pests and diseases that harm American agriculture and our environment. Help us keep American agriculture healthy by following the guidance on this page about products you may want to bring into the United States.

Travelers entering the United States must declare all agricultural or wildlife products.

Travelers entering the United States must declare all agricultural or wildlife products to U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials. You must also tell them if you visited a farm or were in contact with animals before traveling to the United States.

U.S. agricultural inspectors will examine your items to be sure they meet entry requirements and do not harbor harmful foreign pests or diseases. U.S. inspectors have the authority to make a final determination about whether your products can enter the country. We recommend that you keep receipts and original packaging of agricultural products as proof of their country of origin.

As long as you declare all of the agricultural products you are bringing with you, you will not face any penalties—even if an inspector determines

that they cannot enter the country.

Coffee, Teas, Honey, Nuts and Spices that You CAN and CANNOT bring back to the United States

Expand All

Coffee (Roasted, Green, Whole, Seeds, Plant Parts)

USDA's requirements for the entry of coffee/coffee beans carried by a traveler differ according to the specific form of the product and location of the port of entry:

- **Roasted Coffee***:* Travelers are permitted to bring unlimited quantities of roasted coffee in their luggage without restriction through any U.S. port of entry. However, as with all agricultural products, you must declare the product at entry.
- **Green (unroasted) Coffee Beans**: Travelers are permitted to bring unlimited quantities of green coffee beans in their luggage without restriction through any port of entry in the continental United States; however, green coffee beans are prohibited from entering into or transiting through Hawaii or Puerto Rico. As with all agricultural products, you must declare the product at entry. If any quarantine pests are found in green coffee beans, the product will be seized and destroyed.
- **Whole Coffee Berries** (aka, coffee cherries): fresh coffee berries—defined as the unprocessed, whole coffee fruit with pulp—**are prohibited entry at all U.S. ports of entry** because the pulp presents an exotic fruit-fly risk.

Coffee seeds or other plant parts intended for planting **are prohibited entry into Hawaii or Puerto Rico.** Additionally, some varieties are protected as threatened or endangered species and have specific restrictions because of their status.

Green Tea, Black Tea

Travelers are permitted to bring without restriction any quantity of products composed solely of tea leaves (*Camellia sinensis:* includes black tea, green tea, oolong, dark tea, white tea, yellow tea). As with all agricultural products, you must declare the product at entry.

Herbal Tea/Herbal Infusions

Products traveler CAN bring if commercially packaged/prepared (declare all at entry):

- Hibiscus flowers contained in herbal tea products are permitted entry, subject to inspection.
- Herbal tea products containing ginseng or goldenseal are permitted, subject to inspection, if commercially packaged and ready to be boiled, steeped, or microwaved in liquid.
- Commercially packaged herbal products containing lemongrass are permitted subject to inspection; please see the Spices section of this page for guidance on lemongrass that is not commercially packaged.
- Dodder *(aka Semen cuscatae, Cuscuta chinensis, or tu si zi; Cuscuta japonica, or toshishi or tosaja)* is permitted in herbal tea products if contained in individual, ready-to-steep tea bags and dodder is processed sufficiently for seed color to be gray.
- Herbal tea products containing citrus (*Rutaceae*) leaves, flowers, bark, roots, peel, or fruit are enterable if the product is commercially packaged and ready to be boiled, steeped, or microwaved in liquid, or if package is labelled as having undergone required heat treatment. Otherwise, entry is prohibited.
- Herbal teas containing bark from *Prunus* trees (apricot, cherry, peach plum, etc.) are enterable if commercially packaged and ready to be boiled, steeped, or microwaved in liquid, or if package is labelled as having undergone required heat treatment. Otherwise, entry is prohibited.
- Masala chai, if all components are finely ground, may enter any port except for Hawaii or Puerto Rico, subject to inspection. If not finely ground, please contact USDA’s Plant Protection and Quarantine Permit Services office at (301) 851-2046 to inquire about requirements.

- Roobios tea is permitted, subject to inspection.

RESTRICTED or PROHIBITED products containing herbal ingredients:

- Coca leaves and khat (Arabian tea) are restricted as Federally controlled substances.
- Products containing bark derived from endangered plants protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) are restricted. Please see https://www.cites.org/eng/app/appendices.php for more information.
- Any product containing barberry (*berberis*) leaves or *Prunus* (apricot, cherry, peach plum, etc.) flowers is prohibited from entry.

Honey

USDA regulates only honey and beeswax that is being imported for use as feed for bees in apiaries. Generally, travelers can bring in comb honey, royal jelly, bee bread, or propolis if it is intended for personal consumption.

For more information, contact the Food and Drug Administration Center's for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition at (888) 463-6332.

Nuts

Nuts are allowed entry if they have been boiled, cooked, ground, oven dried, pureed, roasted, or steamed. For guidance on whether certain nuts prepared in other ways (for instance, raw, blanched, or in shells/husks) may enter and under which conditions, please contact USDA's Plant Import Information Line at 877-770-5990 (Toll-Free) or by email at plantproducts.permits@aphis.usda.gov.

Spices

Most dried spices can be imported except for orange, lemon, lime, and other citrus leaves and seeds, and many vegetable and fruit seeds. While not explicitly

prohibited, **we also advise against bringing lemongrass** that is not part of a commercially packaged product into the United States. Lemongrass needs to be inspected for plant rusts, which could lead to Customs delays and possible seizure.

Expand All

Need Help?

If you can't find your commodity listed above, browse the Agricultural Import Requirements Database.

If you still have questions about a particular plant or plant products (fruits, vegetables, plant parts, seeds, soil, or souvenirs made from wood or plants), contact us.

Phone: 877-770-5990 (toll-free)

Email: plantproducts.permits@usda.gov

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