# UK Tea Price Increases: What's Driving the Cost, 2020 to 2025

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **UK tea prices, in summary:** UK tea bag prices rose 30-50% 2020-2025; production cost rises, climate impact, labour, shipping, FX; cost-management is practical.

*Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in April 2026.*

**UK tea prices have risen significantly over the past 5 years, climate change affecting tea growing regions, currency volatility (post Brexit), shipping costs, energy and packaging costs, and labour cost inflation in tea producing countries all contribute. Yorkshire Tea 240-bag has gone from £8 to £12-15. Per cup price still under 8p, but the trend is upward. Mass market tea remains one of the great value hot drinks despite increases.**

## The increase in numbers

### 5-year price trajectory

Approximate pricing changes 2020-2025:

- Yorkshire Tea 240-bag: £8 £12-15 (+50-87%)
- Tetley 240-bag: £6-7 £10-12 (+60-80%)
- PG Tips 240-bag: £6-7 £9-11 (+50-70%)
- Twinings English Breakfast 80-bag: £3-4 £4.50-5.50 (+30-40%)
- Pukka herbal range: £3 £4-4.50 (+40-50%)
- Specialty matcha: £15-20 £20-30 (+25-50%)

### Per cup price still low

Despite increases, per cup tea remains genuinely cheap. Yorkshire Tea 240 at £15 is still 6p per cup. Even at premium pricing it's the cheapest hot drink available.

## Why tea prices have risen

### 1. Climate change in tea growing regions

Tea is climate sensitive. Recent issues:

- **India (Assam, Darjeeling):** Erratic monsoons, heatwaves disrupting harvest cycles.
- **Sri Lanka:** Recent currency and economic crises reduced output.
- **Kenya:** Drought and changing rainfall patterns.
- **China:** Regional climate impacts on specialty tea.

Climate change is the structural driver of long term price pressure on tea.

### 2. Currency volatility (post Brexit)

The British pound has been weaker against trade relevant currencies (US dollar, Indian rupee) since 2016. UK tea is largely imported in dollar denominated commodity trade. Weaker pound means higher GBP cost.

### 3. Shipping cost inflation

Container shipping costs spiked dramatically 2020-2022 (post COVID supply chain disruption). Costs have moderated but remain higher than pre-2020. Tea is bulky, low value density, shipping is meaningful proportion of cost.

### 4. Energy and packaging cost inflation

Tea bags require packaging materials. Both raw material costs and energy costs rose sharply 2021-2023. Packaging is a significant component of finished tea pricing.

### 5. Labour cost inflation in tea producing countries

India, Sri Lanka, Kenya have seen rising labour costs. Tea is labour intensive (harvest is manual). Labour cost rises pass through to commodity price.

### 6. Sri Lanka economic crisis

Ceylon tea exports significantly disrupted by Sri Lanka's 2022 economic crisis. Recovery is ongoing.

### 7. UK retail margin pressure

Major retailers (supermarkets) have absorbed some cost increases but pass through some to consumers. Inflation across UK retail has been broad.

### 8. UK energy costs

Tea production and packaging in the UK requires energy. UK energy costs spiked dramatically 2021-2023; remained elevated through 2025.

## The structural picture

Tea pricing is unlikely to return to pre-2020 levels. The drivers (climate, currency, shipping, labour) are structural rather than temporary. The UK tea consumer should expect:

- Continued modest price increases over the next 5-10 years.
- Mainstream brands remaining the value option vs specialty.
- Supermarket own brand remaining cheapest.
- Premium specialty tea (matcha, single origin) seeing larger increases.

## What it means for British tea drinkers

### Daily routine

The 4-cups daily British tea habit is still genuinely affordable. Yorkshire Tea 240 at £15 = £75-90 annually for 4 cups daily. Compared to coffee (£365 annually) or café drinks (£4,380 annually), tea remains exceptional value.

### Behavioural changes

Some drinkers have:

- Shifted to supermarket own brand value tier.
- Increased pot brewing (1 bag for multiple cups).
- Reduced premium specialty consumption.
- Bought larger pack sizes for per unit savings.
- Stockpiled during sale periods.

### Subscription advantages

Some subscription services lock in pricing for the subscription period, buffer against ongoing increases.

## How to manage rising tea costs

### 1. Buy bigger packs

240-bag and 440-bag packs offer significant per unit savings vs 80-bag packs.

### 2. Cross shop supermarkets

Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda, Morrisons rotate special offers. Yorkshire Tea regularly discounted to ~£8-10 instead of £12-15.

### 3. Cash and carry / wholesale

Costco, Makro for committed bulk buyers.

### 4. Subscription with locked pricing

Brand direct subscriptions sometimes guarantee pricing.

### 5. Mix premium with mainstream

Premium tea for occasions; mainstream for everyday. Mix the spend.

### 6. Pot brewing efficiency

1 bag for 4 cups via pot brewing.

### 7. Re infuse premium loose leaf

Premium oolong, pu erh: 5-10 infusions per measure. Effective per cup cost much lower.

### 8. Switch to supermarket own brand

If quality difference is acceptable to you, ~50% savings vs mainstream brand.

## Specialty vs mainstream pricing

The price gap between mainstream and specialty has widened:

- Mainstream Yorkshire Tea: 6p per cup.
- Premium loose leaf single origin: 30-50p per cup.
- Ceremonial grade matcha: 50-80p per cup.

Most British drinkers stick with mainstream value despite specialty's growing market presence.

## Has tea quality changed?

Higher pricing hasn't necessarily delivered higher quality. Cost increases have largely flowed through to producers (raw material) and retailers (margin) without significant quality investment in mass market tea.

The picture is different for specialty: premium tea brands have invested in single origin transparency, sustainable sourcing, and quality grading. Premium pricing supports premium quality.

## The 2026 picture

UK tea is more expensive than 5 years ago but remains exceptional value. The cost per cup of mainstream tea is still under 10p. The trajectory is gradual price increase rather than dramatic shift.

For the British tea drinker, the practical answer is: buy bigger packs, cross shop supermarkets, and continue enjoying tea as one of the great value daily rituals.

## FAQ

**Why has tea got more expensive?** Climate, currency, shipping, labour, energy, packaging, multiple structural factors.

**Will prices come down?** Unlikely to pre-2020 levels. Structural increases.

**How to manage cost?** Bigger packs, cross shop, special offers, supermarket own brand.

**Still good value?** Yes, mainstream tea at 5-8p per cup remains exceptional.

**Should I switch to supermarket own brand?** If quality is acceptable to you, yes, significant savings.

*Curator's note: tea is more expensive than it used to be but remains the cheapest hot drink available. The structural drivers (climate, currency, shipping) suggest continued gradual increases. Buy bigger packs, cross shop, and accept that the daily Yorkshire Tea ritual is still excellent value. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.*

## The essentials: UK tea price increases

| Aspect | The note |
|---|---|
| Increase magnitude | UK tea bag price up 30-50% 2020-2025; meaningful inflation |
| Key drivers | Kenyan and Indian production cost rises; shipping; FX |
| Climate impact | Changing rainfall patterns affecting yields |
| Labour costs | Origin-country wage increases |
| Packaging shift | Plant-based bag material slightly more expensive |
| Energy costs | Processing and shipping energy meaningfully up |
| How to manage | Loose-leaf, larger packs, brand-swap to dupes |
| The read | Real cost increase; meaningful long-term pressure |

Common picks around this topic: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. The rest of the tea shop sits here, with UK shipping free above £35.

**FROM THE CURATOR**

*teas* · Per-cup price is the only price that matters. Loose leaf usually wins; supermarket bags sometimes do too.

## More from the tea wiki

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- Black tea
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- Loose leaf vs teabag


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