Turkish Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Turkish tea, in summary:** Turkish tea is a 1924 Republican-era innovation on the Rize Black Sea coast: Chinese small-leaf cultivar, 5th world producer, briskly astringent cup, served in small tulip glasses with sugar.

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

Turkish tea (çay) is the world's highest per capita consumed tea. Strong black tea brewed in a double stack samovar (çaydanl?k), served black or with sugar in tulip shaped glasses. Turkey produces almost all its own tea (Rize province, Black Sea coast). The Turkish tea ritual is foundational to Turkish hospitality and social life.

Turkey's tea consumption

Turkey leads the world in per capita tea consumption, roughly 3.5kg per person annually (compared to UK ~2.5kg, China ~1.5kg). Tea is foundational to Turkish daily life:

- Multiple cups daily.
- Tea served with most meals.

The çaydanl?k brewing system

Turkish tea is brewed in a distinctive two stack pot:

- **Bottom pot:** Boiling water.
- **Top pot:** Strong tea concentrate steeping over the steam.

To serve: pour the strong tea concentrate first, then dilute with hot water from the bottom pot to taste.

The brewing process

1. Boil water in bottom pot.
2. Add 2-4 tablespoons loose leaf Turkish tea to top pot.
3. When water boils, pour some over the leaves.
4. Place top pot back on bottom pot.

5. Steep 10-15 minutes (Turkish tea brews longer than European tea).
6. Pour strong tea concentrate into glass (1/3 full).
7. Top up with hot water to desired strength.

The serving

Traditional serving:

- Small tulip shaped glass (ince belli, "thin waisted").
- Sugar cubes available; many Turks add 2-3.
- No milk (milk in Turkish tea is unusual).
- Served on small saucer.
- Often paired with biscuits, simit, or other Turkish food.

Turkish tea regions

Almost all Turkish tea is grown in Rize province on the Black Sea coast. The climate (high rainfall, mountainous, cool) supports tea cultivation. Major Turkish tea producers:

- Çaykur (state owned; largest producer).
- Do?a.
- Various smaller regional brands.

Caffeine

40-60mg per glass (depending on how strong it's diluted). The 10-15 minute brew extracts more caffeine than European style 3-5 minute brewing.

Where to buy in UK

- Turkish grocers (London, Birmingham, Manchester have Turkish neighbourhoods).
- Online Turkish food retailers.
- Specialty tea shops sometimes.
- Direct import from Turkey.

Compared to British tea

Brewing

Turkish: double stack samovar; long steep. British: kettle + tea bag; short steep.

Serving

Turkish: small glass, no milk, sugar. British: large mug, milk, optional sugar.

Strength

Turkish: very strong, often diluted at serving. British: strong but milk friendly.

Cultural role

Both foundational to national identity but different ritual structures.

UK Turkish tea drinkers

Turkish diaspora communities in UK (London, Birmingham) maintain Turkish tea tradition. Turkish restaurants and grocers serve Turkish style tea. Specialty British tea shops increasingly stock Turkish tea.

Turkish tea culture and hospitality

Turkish tea (çay) is the central social ritual of daily life, not just a drink, and the rhythm runs across the whole day: with the kahvalt? breakfast spread, mid-morning at work, with lunch, through repeated afternoon çay breaks, and after dinner. Ten to fifteen small glasses a day is normal; because each tulip glass holds only about 100ml, the total volume is close to the British four-mug habit but spread across far more occasions.

Hospitality is built on tea. A visitor is offered a glass straight away, business meetings and shop visits open with one, and refusing outright can feel awkward, so declining successive refills is the gentler way to signal you have had enough. Tea is drunk everywhere: in the traditional çayhane tea houses (long a male social space for backgammon and conversation, now mixed in the cities), at workplaces, in restaurants where the meal closes with a glass that is often free, and at home throughout the day.

The cup is served black in a small tulip-shaped glass on a white saucer, with sugar cubes alongside rather than stirred in by default; most drinkers take one to three cubes, dissolved while sipping or held between the teeth, though some prefer it unsweetened. Milk is never added. The glass, the saucer, the sugar and the small spoon are as much part of the ritual as the brew itself.

FAQ

How is Turkish tea brewed? Double stack samovar (çaydanl?k) with strong concentrate diluted to taste.

Caffeine? 40-60mg per glass.

Milk? Not traditional. Black with sugar.

Per capita consumption? Highest in the world.

Where to buy? Turkish grocers; online specialty.

Curator's note: Turkish tea is one of the great national tea traditions, distinctive brewing method, strong character, foundational hospitality. Worth experiencing properly with a çaydanl?k. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

What you need to know: Turkish tea (the foundations)

Field	Detail
Region	Rize Province on Turkey's eastern Black Sea coast (also Trabzon, Artvin, Giresun)
Began	1924 (first plantings under Ataturk's republican economic-modernisation programme)

Field	Detail
World position	5th-largest producer globally, behind China, India, Kenya, Sri Lanka
Cultivar	Camellia sinensis var. sinensis (Chinese small-leaf; same as green-tea source plants in China and Japan)
Climate	Cool, wet, mountainous Black Sea coast; year-round mist; comparable to Darjeeling rather than Assam
Per-capita consumption	~3.5kg dried tea per person per year (the highest in the world)

What to buy now

For the brand introduction, buy Caykur Turkish tea (the state-owned brand, widest UK availability through Turkish grocers) or Dogadan Turkish tea (the largest private producer). For the proper drinking experience, pair with a set of tulip-shaped tea glasses and ideally a caydanlik stacked tea pot from a Turkish grocer or online specialist. For comparable cultivar-context teas to taste alongside, try a Darjeeling first flush (same Chinese small-leaf cultivar from a different climate).

Reference noted

- EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine (2015)

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Start cheap, stay cheap until something stops you. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

Turkish tea reading

For cultivar context see the Camellia sinensis sinensis piece. For comparable regional traditions see the Iranian tea, Russian samovar tea, and Azerbaijani tea pieces. For wider world-tea-map context see the black tea family guide and the most popular tea in the world overview.

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