How to Brew Rooibos Tea Properly

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **How to brew rooibos tea, in summary:** Rooibos wants full boiling water and a long steep and never turns bitter, so it is almost impossible to over-brew. Caffeine-free, takes milk, good iced.

Rooibos is the easiest tea to brew and the one people most often make too weak. It cannot go bitter, so the usual caution does not apply. The rooibos guide and benefits page cover the why; here is the how.

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

Full boiling water

Unlike green or white tea, rooibos wants water at a full rolling boil. It has no caffeine and very low tannin, so heat does not make it harsh, it just extracts more of the sweet, woody flavour.

Steep long, with no penalty

Five to ten minutes, longer is fine. This is the part people get wrong: a quick dunk gives a thin, pinkish, disappointing cup. Rooibos does not turn bitter with time, so a long steep is pure upside. If your rooibos tastes of nothing, you under-steeped it.

Leaf or bag, and re-steeping

Use a generous teabag or a heaped teaspoon of loose rooibos. It re-steeps weakly, so it is mostly a one-good-infusion tea, make the first one strong.

Milk, iced, blended

Rooibos takes milk like a light black tea and is excellent iced, where its natural sweetness shines. It is also the best caffeine-free base for a homemade chai or vanilla latte, see the rooibos recipes.

The vessel and the heat it holds

The cup or pot you use changes the result more than people expect. A thin cup sheds heat fast and under-extracts, so the rooibos comes out weaker than the same leaf brewed in a warmed pot or a heavier mug that holds temperature through the steep. Pre-warm the pot with a little hot water and discard it before adding the leaf, so the brewing temperature stays high from the first second. Covering the pot while it steeps keeps

both the heat and the aromatics in.

Green rooibos too

Green (unfermented) rooibos exists alongside the familiar red kind: it is steamed rather than oxidised, so it is lighter, grassier and a little less sweet. It brews exactly the same forgiving way, full boiling water and a long steep, so the method here covers both. Choosing between them is a flavour preference, not a brewing change.

Common mistakes

The only real one: under-steeping. Treat rooibos with less caution than tea, not more, boiling water, long steep, generous leaf, and it goes from forgettable to properly good.

Brewing rooibos, at a glance

Dial	Rule
Water	Full rolling boil, rooibos needs the heat
Time	Long, 5-10 min, with no bitterness penalty
Form	Leaf or bag; re-steeps acceptably, first cup strongest
Milk/iced	Both work well; takes milk and blends like a tea
Caffeine	None; naturally caffeine-free

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · With rooibos, what each cup costs is the one number to compare. Loose rooibos tends to win, and a supermarket bag will sometimes keep up.

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