

How to Brew Pu-erh Tea Properly

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

How to brew pu-erh tea, in summary: Pu-erh is fermented dark tea: rinse the leaf first, full boiling water, then many short evolving infusions. Raw vs ripe, no milk, gongfu style.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for How to Brew Pu-erh Tea Properly. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-brew-pu-erh-tea/>*

Pu-erh is a fermented, aged tea and it brews unlike anything else in the [pu-erh guide](#). Two things matter most: the rinse, and short repeated steepings.

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

Rinse the leaves first

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Rinse the leaves first, How to Brew Pu-erh Tea Properly. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-brew-pu-erh-tea/>*

This is the step nobody explains. Pour boiling water over the pu-erh, swirl for a few seconds, then pour that water away before brewing properly. The rinse wakes the compressed, aged leaf and washes off storage dust. It is standard practice for pu-erh and skipping it gives a muddier first cup.

Hot water

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Hot water, How to Brew Pu-erh Tea Properly. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-brew-pu-erh-tea/>*

Full boiling water, 95 to 100C. Pu-erh is robust and aged; it wants heat to open up. This is the opposite of green or white tea.

Many short infusions

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Many short infusions, How to Brew Pu-erh Tea Properly. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-brew-pu-erh-tea/>*

After the rinse, steep short, around 20 to 40 seconds for the first proper infusion, and add a little time each round. A good pu-erh gives many infusions, often five to ten, evolving as it goes, earthy and deep mellowing to smooth and sweet. One long steep wastes it and tastes flat or harsh.

Raw vs ripe

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Raw vs ripe, How to Brew Pu-erh Tea Properly. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-brew-pu-erh-tea/>*

Ripe (shou) pu-erh is dark, earthy and smooth, very forgiving. Raw (sheng) is sharper and more astringent young, and ages for decades. Both rinse and re-steep the same way; raw just wants a slightly gentler hand when young. The [pu-erh guide](#) covers the difference.

No milk

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for No milk, How to Brew Pu-erh Tea Properly. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-brew-pu-erh-tea/>*

No. Pu-erh is drunk clean, and its depth is the whole experience.

The vessel and the heat it holds

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The vessel and the heat it holds, How to Brew Pu-erh Tea Properly. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-brew-pu-erh-tea/>*

The cup or pot you use changes the result more than people expect. A thin cup sheds heat fast and under-extracts, so the pu-erh comes out weaker than the same leaf brewed in a warmed pot or a heavier mug that holds temperature. 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. A small pot and a high leaf-to-water ratio also make the many-short-steeps method easier to control.

Storing pu-erh

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Storing pu-erh, How to Brew Pu-erh Tea Properly. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-brew-pu-erh-tea/>*

Pu-erh is the one tea where storage is part of the product, not just preservation: it continues to age and develop over years if kept well. Keep it somewhere stable, dark and away from strong smells, with a little air circulation rather than sealed airtight, which is the opposite of delicate green and white teas. A badly stored cake goes flat or musty; a well-kept one deepens. The dedicated [how to store pu-erh](#) guide covers it properly.

Common mistakes

Skipping the rinse; one long steep instead of many short ones; treating it like a delicate tea with cool water. Rinse, hot water, short repeated steeps, and pu-erh becomes the most re-steepable tea you own.

Brewing pu-erh, at a glance

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Dial	Rule
Rinse	A quick 5-10s rinse first, discard it; wakes the leaf, cleans dark tea
Water	Full boiling water, pu-erh needs the heat
Style	Many short infusions, not one long steep
Raw vs ripe	Sheng (raw) brighter, sharper; shou (ripe) dark, smooth, earthy
Milk	No; the depth and earthiness are the point

Reference noted

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- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · The cup you finish is the right cup. Skip the variety until that one is sorted.

Tea reading

- [Pu-erh tea](#)
- [Gongfu brewing](#)
- [tea brewing reference](#)
- [How to store pu-erh](#)

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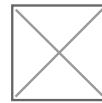
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