Best Tea for Bubble Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Best tea for bubble tea, in summary:** The best tea base for bubble tea: strong black for milk tea, jasmine or green for fruit, culinary matcha, roasted oolong, and why strength is non-negotiable.

Everything else in bubble tea, the pearls, the sugar, the milk, sits on top of the tea, and a weak or wrong base is the single most common reason a homemade boba tastes flat. This page is the base tea buying and brewing guide; the assembly is in how to make bubble tea at home and the overview in our boba and bubble tea guide.

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

For classic milk tea: strong black

The traditional milk tea base is a strong black tea that holds up against milk and sugar. A brisk Ceylon or an English Breakfast style is ideal, and an Assam-forward blend works for the same reason it works with milk in a hot cup, see black tea by origin. We stock strong blacks well suited to this, and the Williamson Earl Grey we carry is specifically categorised for boba because Earl Grey milk tea is a real modern favourite. Brew it at roughly double normal strength, fully boiling water, a long steep, then cool it.

For fruit tea: green or jasmine

Fruit bubble tea wants a clean, bright base that flatters fruit rather than fighting it. A good green tea or, the classic choice, a fragrant jasmine green is ideal; jasmine in particular is the signature fruit tea and milk green tea base across Taiwan. Brew these strong but off the boil so they do not turn bitter when concentrated, the principle in how to brew green tea.

For matcha bubble tea: ceremonial style or culinary matcha

Matcha bubble tea is one of the most popular modern variants and has its own page, matcha bubble tea. The base is whisked matcha rather than steeped tea; a sturdy culinary or latte grade matcha holds its flavour through milk and ice better than a delicate ceremonial one, and the grade logic is in ceremonial vs culinary matcha.

Oolong, the connoisseur base

Roasted oolong makes a superb, slightly toasty milk tea and is the base of choice for many serious bubble tea shops. It sits between black and green in body, see the oolong guide and how to brew oolong. If you have made the black and jasmine versions and want to level up, oolong is the next step.

Why strength is non-negotiable

Whatever the base, brew it far stronger than a drinking cup, because ice will dilute it and milk will mute it. A bubble tea built on normal-strength tea tastes of milk and sugar with a vague tea hint, which is exactly the disappointing shop drink people make at home by accident. Doubling the leaf, or steeping longer for blacks, is the fix, and it is the recurring lesson of the whole cluster.

Loose leaf versus bags

Either works; what matters is strength and quality, not format, see loose leaf vs tea bags. Bags are convenient for a strong quick base; good loose leaf gives a rounder result if you are making it properly. Use more of whichever than you would for a hot cup.

What we stock for it

For milk tea, a strong Ceylon black or English Breakfast style from the range; for fruit and milk green tea, the Twinings Jasmine Green; for matcha bubble tea, a culinary-suited matcha such as the Loyd matcha powder. The Williamson Earl Grey is specifically the product tagged for boba in our shop, for an Earl Grey milk tea. Browse via the Japanese tea hub for the green and matcha side and the black tea origins for the milk tea side.

Caffeine free bubble tea

For children or an evening drink, a rooibos or fruit herbal base makes a very good caffeine free fruit bubble tea, naturally sweet and with no bitterness even brewed strong, see how to brew rooibos. It is an underused option that solves the "can the kids have one" question.

Where bubble tea came from

Bubble tea was invented in Taiwan in the 1980s, and the two tea houses most often credited, in Taichung and Tainan, both tell a version of the same story: someone added sweetened tapioca, traditionally eaten as a dessert, to iced milk tea, and a phenomenon was born. The name itself is a small history lesson. "Bubble" originally referred to the frothy bubbles created by shaking the iced tea, not to the pearls; the chewy tapioca balls are the "boba". Over four decades the drink spread from Taiwanese street stalls across East and Southeast Asia, then worldwide, and with the brown sugar wave of the late 2010s into the global mainstream. That lineage explains why Taiwan remains the reference point for what is authentic, and why regional offshoots like Hong Kong evaporated-milk tea and Thai tea sit slightly apart.

Bubble tea base by drink, at a glance

For…	The pick
Classic milk tea	Strong black: brisk Ceylon, English Breakfast or Assam forward

For…	The pick
Earl Grey milk tea	A bright Earl Grey base and a real modern favourite
Fruit tea	Clean green or, the classic, fragrant jasmine green
Matcha boba	Sturdy culinary or latte grade matcha, whisked
Level up	Roasted oolong: toasty, between black and green
Caffeine free	Rooibos or fruit herbal: naturally sweet, no bitterness

Quick take

Match the base to the drink: strong black or Earl Grey for classic milk tea, jasmine or green for fruit and milk green tea, culinary matcha for matcha boba, roasted oolong to level up, rooibos for a caffeine-free version. The one non-negotiable is strength: brew every base roughly double a drinking cup and cool it before assembling, because ice dilutes and milk mutes, and a weak base is the single most common reason a homemade boba tastes flat. Get the base right and everything else, the pearls, the sugar, the milk, falls into place. For the base teas, browse strong black and jasmine green in the tea shop, the Twinings jasmine, or a culinary matcha powder matched for boba.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Whichever bubble tea you drink to the last pearl is the one to order again. Try the other flavours after that.

Tea reading

- How to make bubble tea at home
- Matcha bubble tea
- Jasmine tea guide

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
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