Tea Ceremonies Around the World

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea ceremonies around the world, in summary:** Tea ceremonies from Japan, China, Britain, Morocco, Russia, Tibet, South America and Turkey: a brief tour of the world's tea rituals.

Almost every culture that took tea seriously built a ceremony around it, and the striking thing is how much these independent traditions agree on the things that matter. This is the overview page for our world tea ceremonies cluster; each tradition has its own full guide linked below, and the people and history behind them sit in the people behind tea, beginning with Lu Yu, who first argued tea was worth doing properly.

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

The great traditions, in brief

The Japanese tea ceremony, chanoyu, is the most codified: whisked matcha, decades of training, every movement deliberate. The Chinese gongfu ceremony is the connoisseur's method, tiny vessels and many short infusions to read a leaf fully. The Moroccan mint ritual is hospitality made visible, sweet gunpowder green poured from a height, three glasses, never refused. Russian tea culture revolves around the samovar and a strong concentrate diluted to taste. Tibetan butter tea is survival and sustenance, churned with yak butter and salt. The Korean darye is the quietest, an unhurried, naturalistic counterpoint to its neighbours.

What they all share

Across cultures that never coordinated, the same technical truths recur: water matched to the leaf rather than always boiling, warmed vessels, small volumes, short repeated infusions, and total attention to timing. Strip the cultural specifics and a ceremony is a codified version of exactly the brewing discipline this wiki teaches everywhere, see the water temperature guide and the brewing pages. That convergence is the single most instructive fact in the cluster.

Hospitality and time

The second universal is social: tea ceremony is almost always about welcoming someone and deliberately slowing down. The Moroccan three glasses, the Russian all-day samovar, the Japanese host's years of preparation for a single guest, all encode the idea that making tea for someone is an act of care worth doing unhurriedly. That is the part a modern drinker can borrow immediately without any equipment, covered

further in the cluster pages.

Where to start

If you drink matcha, start with the Japanese ceremony. If you love oolong or pu-erh, start with gongfu brewing at home, the most immediately useful page here. If you want hospitality and flavour, the Moroccan ritual. Each links onward; the cluster is built to be wandered, not read once.

Tea ceremonies around the world at a glance

Tradition	Origin	Defining feature
Chanoyu (Japanese tea ceremony)	Japan, 15th century onwards	Highly formalised matcha preparation with strict choreography; tea-as-meditation
Gongfu cha	Southern China, Ming dynasty	Small-vessel multi-infusion brewing with attention to leaf evolution across steeps
British afternoon tea	UK, 1840s onwards	Light meal of sandwiches, cakes, and tea between lunch and dinner; Victorian social ritual
Moroccan mint tea	Morocco and North Africa	Green gunpowder tea brewed with fresh mint and sugar, poured from height into glasses
Russian samovar tradition	Russia, 18th century onwards	Strong tea concentrate diluted with water from a central samovar; multi-cup social drinking
Tibetan butter tea	Tibet and Himalayan regions	Po cha: salted black tea churned with yak butter; high-altitude caloric drink
Yerba mate gourd	Paraguay, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil	Cold or hot yerba mate shared in a gourd via bombilla straw; intensely communal
Turkish çay	Turkey, 20th century onwards	Strong black tea brewed in a double-pot, served in small tulip-shaped glasses, drunk through the day

Why tea ceremony exists across cultures

Almost every culture that adopted tea developed its own ritual, and that is not coincidence. The rituals look very different on the surface (Japanese chanoyu meditative and silent; Argentine yerba mate loud and communal; British afternoon tea social and food-focused) but they share the same underlying features: time set aside for the drink, attention paid to the preparation, the cup shared communally or taken contemplatively. Tea's properties suit this: the caffeine is meaningful but moderate, the brewing takes a few minutes, and the cup is hot enough to require slow drinking. Coffee has its rituals too (the Italian espresso bar, the Turkish cezve), but they tend to be shorter and more transactional; tea ceremony tends toward the longer, slower and more contemplative.

The bottom line on tea ceremonies

Every major tea-drinking culture developed its own ritual; the rituals look different but share underlying features (set-aside time, careful preparation, communal or contemplative consumption). It is worth exploring

two or three traditions hands-on if you are seriously interested in tea; the cultural depth changes how you think about your daily kitchen-table cup. The lesson that carries across all of them: time spent preparing tea well is rarely wasted, and the cup tastes meaningfully better when you give it the few minutes of attention it asks for.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · A small reliable stash beats a big curious one. Cycle two or three teas you genuinely enjoy.

Tea reading

For the individual traditions see the Japanese chanoyu, the Chinese gongfu ceremony and gongfu brewing at home, the Moroccan mint ritual, Russian samovar culture, Tibetan butter tea and the Korean darye. For brewing fundamentals see how to make tea properly and how to brew green tea.

More related guides

- Tea Culture Around the World

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