Nescafé: The Instant Coffee Benchmark

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Nescafe, in summary:** Nescafe is the instant-coffee category benchmark from Nestle (1938); three UK main lines bracket the category by price and quality.

Nescafé is one of the most recognised coffee names in the world and the instant coffee benchmark for most British households. Buy it on the Nescafé shop page; this is the clear placement, paired with tea vs coffee caffeine.

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

What Nescafé makes

The stocked range centres on the Azera and Gold Blend instant coffee lines, the better end of instant. Browse the stocked range on the Nescafé shop page. It is a coffee proposition carried for the many households that drink both tea and coffee.

What Nescafé is, and where it sits

Nescafé is the global instant-coffee benchmark, the line that defined the category for most British households. Founded by Nestlé in Switzerland in 1938 (developed partly to stabilise a Brazilian coffee-bean surplus into a powder), it is freeze-dried or spray-dried soluble coffee: real coffee brewed and then dehydrated into granules that reconstitute with hot water. The cup is recognisably coffee and far faster than any café method, though different in texture and aroma from fresh espresso or filter. The UK shelf is dominated by three lines, Original, Gold Blend and Azera, with the wider family adding Dolce Gusto pods, Decaf, hotel sticks and even an instant tea.

The Original, Gold Blend and Azera ladder

The most useful buying knowledge is the ladder between the three UK lines, because most households are locked into one by habit and a small change shifts the cup. Original is the workhorse: a robusta-led, freeze-dried granule with a strong, slightly bitter cup, cheapest and the right pick for very milky, sweetened mugs. Gold Blend is the upgrade, higher in Arabica, smoother and rounder with less bitter back-note, worth the small premium if you drink it with little or no milk, and better as a black coffee. Azera is the barista-style line, adding finely-ground microground coffee to the soluble base for a slight crema and a noticeably more café-like cup, the one to buy if you are missing the café and would otherwise spend on a machine.

How to get the most from it

Instant coffee rewards a few minutes of care. Use just-off-the-boil water, not a full rolling boil, which scalds soluble coffee into a bitter note; measure rather than tip from the jar (a slightly heaped teaspoon of Original, a little less Gold, since Gold is stronger per granule); bloom it with a small splash of hot water and a stir before topping up; and use a thicker-walled mug to hold the heat. For Azera the same bloom-and-stir helps the microground. For how its caffeine compares with tea, see the caffeine guide and tea vs coffee.

Who it is for

Nescafé is for the coffee-and-tea household that wants a dependable instant option; it is clearly a coffee brand within a tea-led shop, placed as such in the best UK tea brands guide. On the shelf its main rivals are Kenco, Douwe Egberts, Lavazza and Carte Noire: Gold Blend and Kenco Smooth sit at much the same quality and price, and Azera competes with Kenco Millicano, so the difference is often brand habit as much as blind-tasted quality.

In short: Nescafe

Fact	Note
Owner	Nestle (since 1938)
Country	Switzerland (HQ), global
Category	Instant (soluble) coffee + pods + microground
UK main lines	Original, Gold Blend, Azera
Decaf?	Yes, several decaf variants
Cafe equivalent?	No; the instant tier is its own category
Cup vs cafe	A faster, less complex cup
Best home use	Workplace, hotel rooms, quick comfort cup

The bottom line on Nescafé

Reduced to one paragraph: Nescafé is the instant-coffee benchmark, run by Nestlé since 1938, with three UK lines (Original, Gold Blend, Azera) that bracket the category by price and quality. It is really useful as a fast everyday brew or a workplace and hotel room fix, and does not pretend to compete with café grade espresso or filter; pick the line that matches the moment and it satisfies. A note on the parent company: Nestlé is a large multinational with long-running public criticisms (historically over infant-formula marketing, water extraction and supply-chain concerns) and runs the Nescafé Plan sustainable-sourcing programme toward Rainforest Alliance certification; some buyers will weigh that for and some against. Buy Nescafé from the Nescafé brand page, or browse the wider tea shop.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Drink the Nescafé you enjoy, not the jar the shelf pushes. Curiosity is the only reliable guide.

Reference noted

- NHS guidance on caffeine

Tea reading

Continue with Nescafe brand page, instant coffee, coffee vs tea, how to judge tea quality, Mokate brand and Loyd brand. For the home shelf, the English tea range and loose leaf range.

More from the tea wiki

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