Tea and Cheese Pairing: Match Weight or Contrast

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea and cheese pairing, in summary:** Tea-cheese pairing follows match-weight or contrast; Earl Grey + brie, Assam + cheddar, jasmine + goats, pu-erh + Stilton classics.

Tea and cheese sounds odd and is, in fact, one of the best pairings in food, frequently outperforming wine, because the very things that make tea good with food are exactly what cheese wants. This sits in the cooking cluster beside tea and food pairings.

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

Why it works better than you expect

Wine pairs with cheese largely through acidity and tannin cutting fat and salt. Tea has tannin and aromatic complexity too, plus it is hot, which melts and lifts fat in a way cold wine cannot, and it has no alcohol to clash with pungent cheese. For many cheeses tea is genuinely the better partner, which is the surprising, dinner party winning point of this page.

The pairing principles

Match weight and intensity, as with any pairing. Big, tannic black teas stand up to strong, hard and blue cheeses. Smoky lapsang is extraordinary with smoked and washed rind cheeses, see Lapsang Souchong. Delicate green and white teas suit fresh, mild, creamy cheeses; floral oolong and jasmine flatter soft and goat cheeses; malty Assam handles aged cheddar. It is the profile matching logic of the black and green tea guides applied to the cheeseboard.

Classic pairings to start with

Assam or strong black with mature cheddar; lapsang with smoked or washed rind; Earl Grey with creamy bloomy cheese (bergamot and brie is a revelation), see Earl Grey; green or jasmine with fresh goat cheese; a tannic black with blue. Start with cheddar and a strong black to prove the principle, then explore.

Serve it right

Brew the teas properly and a touch on the strong side so they hold against the fat, the recurring cluster rule, see the water temperature guide. Serve the cheese at room temperature and the tea hot; the temperature contrast is part of why it beats wine.

Why this is a genuine entertaining trick

A tea and cheese flight is novel, alcohol free, inclusive (works for drivers, pregnancy with the usual caveats, dry months) and genuinely delicious, which makes it one of the most useful ideas in the whole cooking cluster for hosting. It also showcases the shop's range across one table.

What it boils down to

Tea and cheese is not a novelty, it is a real, often superior alternative to wine pairing, built on the same tannin and aroma logic. Match intensity to intensity, brew strong, start with cheddar and strong black, and use the food pairing guide to go further.

In short: tea and cheese pairings

Cheese	Tea pairing
Brie/Camembert	Earl Grey; bergamot floral lifts creaminess
Mature Cheddar	Strong Assam or Yorkshire builder; matches body
Goats cheese	Jasmine green tea; floral-to-tangy harmony
Roquefort/Stilton	Pu-erh shou; earthy depth balances blue funk
Hard alpine (Comte)	Oolong; nutty roast complementary
Smoked cheese	Lapsang Souchong; smoke-meets-smoke
Cream cheese	Light Darjeeling; delicate balance
Tip	Match weight-with-weight; contrast for blue

Serving a tea and cheese flight

Bring three to five cheeses to room temperature, about thirty minutes out of the fridge, with biscuits or bread, grapes, apple and a little fig jam or walnut alongside. Brew each tea fresh and serve it hot in small cups, one tea per cheese, working from lightest to strongest, a light Darjeeling with a mild cheese first, pu-erh with Stilton last, the same structure as a wine flight. Sip, eat, sip again so the tea bridges each bite. A proper flight runs sixty to ninety minutes and makes a genuine, alcohol free centrepiece for hosting. For something more adventurous, a white Silver Needle flatters a truffle cheese and a roasted hojicha adds depth to brie.

Reference noted

- PubMed: Green tea catechins and body weight regulation
- NHS: Healthy weight

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More pairing reading

Continue with tea and food pairings, Earl Grey tea, pu-erh tea, jasmine tea and Assam tea.

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- Green tea
- Black tea
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