# How to Store Loose Leaf Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **How to store loose-leaf tea, in summary:** Loose leaf lasts longest because whole leaf has less exposed surface than bag dust. Decant into an opaque airtight caddy at once, one per tea, no freezer.

Loose leaf tea rewards good storage more than any other format, because whole leaf has the least cut surface exposed to air and therefore the longest clear shelf life, if you treat it properly. This sits in the storage cluster beside how to store tea and the loose leaf guide.

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

## Why loose leaf lasts longest

The less a leaf is broken, the slower it stales, because there is less exposed surface for oxygen to attack. Whole leaf tea, kept sealed and dark, can still be excellent a year on, far longer than the fine broken tea in everyday bags, which is part of why loose leaf is worth the small extra effort.

## Decant straight away

Move new loose leaf into an opaque, airtight tin or caddy as soon as you open it. The original pouch is usually fine sealed and unopened, but once opened it rarely reseals well, so a proper caddy is the single best purchase, see best storage containers.

## Cool, dark, dry, odour free

The same four conditions as all tea, but loose leaf is worth being strict about because you are protecting a longer lived product. Keep it away from the oven, kettle, hob, spices and coffee. A dark cupboard at room temperature beats a pretty shelf in the light every time.

## One caddy per tea

Tea takes on smells readily, so a strongly scented tea, an Earl Grey, a jasmine, a fruit blend, will perfume a plain black or green if they share a tin. Keep distinct teas in their own containers, and keep flavoured ones especially tightly sealed and use them sooner, since added oils fade first.

## Do not freeze your everyday leaf

Long term freezing is a niche practice for sealed, never reopened special teas and is easy to get wrong. For tea you actually drink, the condensation risk on opening a cold caddy outweighs any benefit, see storing tea in the fridge. Cool and dark at room temperature is the right answer.

## Summary

Opaque airtight caddy, one per tea, cool dark dry cupboard, bought in amounts you will drink within months. Stored like that, loose leaf stays good for far longer than most people expect, and the date on the pouch hardly matters, see how long tea lasts.

## Storing loose leaf, at a glance

| Factor | Rule |
|---|---|
| Why it lasts | Whole leaf has less exposed surface than bag dust, so it fades slowest |
| Decant | Out of the sale pouch into an opaque airtight caddy straight away |
| One per tea | A caddy per tea; flavours and scents cross over otherwise |
| Conditions | Cool, dark, dry, odour-free |
| Freezer | No for everyday leaf; condensation on opening undoes it |

## Which teas to hold, and the mistakes to avoid

Not every loose leaf ages the same. Greens, yellows and lightly oxidised oolongs are best bought in modest amounts and drunk while bright; sturdy black, roasted oolong, pu erh and dark teas are forgiving and keep comfortably, and pu erh can even be aged deliberately, its own discipline in how to store pu-erh. The mistakes are predictable and well meant: leaving tea in the clip-shut sale pouch (the format least suited to repeated opening), tipping several teas into one big jar to save space (the smoky, floral and spiced homogenise within weeks), a beautiful unglazed or loose-lidded caddy that looks the part but does not seal, and the bulk-bargain kilo that fades on the shelf before you reach it. The fix is the same: decant now, one airtight opaque caddy per tea, and buy amounts you will actually drink.

Pair it with the English tea range and loose leaf range.

**FROM THE CURATOR**

*teas* · Begin with one small cheap pouch; stay until it disappoints. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

## More storage reading

- How to store tea
- How to keep tea fresh
- How long does tea last

- Loose leaf vs tea bags

### More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
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