Can You Drink Old Tea?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Can you drink old tea, in summary:** Old, dry, clean tea is almost always fine, just duller. Damp or musty tea has spoiled and is binned. Use your senses, not the printed date.

"Can you drink old tea" gets a reassuring answer with one firm exception. This sits beside does tea expire and can old tea make you sick.

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

Yes, if it is dry and clean

Tea found at the back of the cupboard months past its date is, in the overwhelming majority of cases, safe to drink if it has stayed dry. It will likely taste flatter and less aromatic than fresh, but stale is a quality issue, not a safety one.

The one time the answer is no

Do not drink tea showing any sign of moisture damage: visible mould, a musty or sour smell, clumping, or obvious damp. That tea has spoiled and is the single real exception, bin it, see can old tea make you sick.

The test

Forget the printed date. Look: any fuzz or odd colour patches? Smell: musty, sour, off? If clean and dry, brew it. If your senses say something is wrong, trust them over optimism; tea is cheap. This sense-check beats any date every time.

Making old-but-fine tea taste better

Stale-but-safe tea brews flat because aromatics faded, not because anything is wrong. Use a touch more leaf, brew to the correct temperature and time for the type, and accept it will not match fresh, see the water temperature guide. It is fine for everyday drinking or for iced tea where freshness is less critical.

Old herbal and flavoured tea

Herbal tisanes and flavoured blends lose their character soonest, so old ones are the most disappointing, though still safe if dry. If the whole point was the flavour and it has gone, replace it rather than persevere, see how long tea lasts.

The clear takeaway

Old dry clean tea: drink it, expect it duller. Old damp or musty tea: bin it. Your eyes and nose are the authority, not the date on the box, see does tea go off.

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

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Keep buying the modest, inexpensive tea until it gives you cause to switch. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

More storage reading

- Can old tea make you sick
- Does tea go off
- How long tea lasts
- How to keep tea fresh

Want to actually buy a good one?

If a clear out has left gaps, buy a good tea and let the cup, not the marketing, decide whether it stays. Everything shown here is matched to the question of tea past its date, which makes it the place to begin. To see the wider range, browse tea and herbal infusions at teas.co.uk or the full tea shop. Whether the tea is old or new, the habit is the same: let the cup and the description decide, discount the marketing, check what each cup costs, and enjoy the free UK delivery over £35.

Browse the tea range ?

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag

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