Is Tap Water OK for Tea?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tap water for tea, in summary:** UK tap water for tea: always safe, sometimes ideal, sometimes benefits from filtering. Cold-tap and freshness rules, bottled water context.

Is tap water OK for tea? For most people, yes, with a few easy habits that turn a variable cup into a consistently good one. This sits beside best water for tea in the water cluster.

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

Safe, but variable

UK tap water is safe to drink and perfectly usable for tea. The issue is not safety but variability: hardness, chlorine and freshness differ by area and by habit, and tea exposes all three, see does water quality affect tea.

The chlorine note

Tap water is treated with chlorine or chloramine. It is harmless but carries a faint pool note tea amplifies. Filtering removes most of it; even letting water stand briefly helps with chlorine, though less with chloramine, see filtered water for tea.

The hardness factor

In hard water areas tap water mutes tea and films the surface, see limescale and tea and hard vs soft water. In soft areas it can taste sharper. A filter narrows the gap toward the moderate water tea prefers.

Freshness is free

The single biggest free improvement is to fill the kettle with fresh cold water each time and boil it once. Reboiled, stewed or hot tap water makes a flat, dull cup regardless of how good the supply is.

Never use the hot tap

Hot tap water can sit in tanks and pick up more dissolved metals and sediment. Always start from the cold tap, even though you are about to boil it; the starting water matters.

When tap water is genuinely fine

In soft or moderate areas, with fresh cold water boiled once, tap water makes excellent tea with no filter at all. The robustness of strong everyday blends also hides minor water faults well, see why your tea tastes bad.

Summary

Tap water is fine for most tea. Cold tap, fresh, boiled once, filtered if your area is hard or heavily chlorinated. Those habits cost nothing and fix almost everything, see best water for tea.

Is UK tap water OK for tea? at a glance

Field	Detail
Safety	UK tap water is among the safest and most regulated drinking water in the world; safe for tea always
Quality for tea	Variable by region; soft-water regions deliver excellent tea-grade water; hard-water regions benefit from filtration
The cold tap rule	Always draw water from the cold tap, never the hot tap; hot pipes can leach metals and stale water
Freshness rule	Use freshly drawn cold water; don't reboil water that's been in the kettle for hours
Best UK regions for tap-water tea	Scotland, Wales, north-west England (soft water)
UK regions benefiting from filtering	London, Home Counties, Kent, Sussex, Essex, Cambridgeshire (hard water)
Chlorine question	UK tap water has chlorine or chloramine added for safety; filterable but not dangerous
Bottled water alternative	Generally not better for tea; many UK bottled brands are higher in mineral content than tap

What to buy

If your area is hard, a Brita-style filter jug (£20 to £40) and a kettle descaler are the practical fixes; robust blends like Yorkshire Tea or PG Tips also hide hard water well. Skip bottled water as an upgrade: most UK brands carry more minerals than your tap.

One trap: the domestic water softener

If your home has a plumbed-in water softener, do not brew tea with the softened supply: softeners swap calcium for sodium, which makes tea taste faintly salty and soapy. Fit a separate unsoftened tap at the kitchen sink for drinking and tea, or run the softened water through a carbon filter jug. For your exact hardness, water-company websites publish figures by postcode, which tells you whether filtering is worth it at all.

Reference noted

- NHS: Water, drinks and your health

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Buy on the cup, not on the label. The wider shelf is there for when you know what you like.

More water reading

For broader water context see the best water for tea guide and does water quality affect tea. For the filtering case see filtered water for tea. For hard-water effects see tea scum and hard water, and hard vs soft water.

More from the tea wiki

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