Can You Make Tea with Distilled Water? (And Why You Should Not)

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Distilled water for tea, in summary:** Distilled water makes flat tasting tea because zero minerals harms extraction. Why filtered tap water beats distilled, the Goldilocks mineral range.

It seems logical that the purest water would make the best tea. It does not. Distilled and zero mineral water gives a flat, hollow cup, and the reason turns out to be rather interesting. This sits beside best water for tea in the water cluster.

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

Purer is not better here

Distilled, deionised and reverse osmosis water has had its minerals stripped out. People assume that means a cleaner cup, but tea is the opposite case: a small amount of dissolved mineral actively helps extract and carry flavour, so stripping it all out hollows the tea, see does water quality affect tea.

Why minerals help

A little mineral content interacts with the flavour and aroma compounds as they leave the leaf, giving body, roundness and a fuller mouthfeel. It also buffers the brew, since near-pure water can drift slightly acidic during steeping. Zero mineral water extracts thinly and tastes weak and characterless even with good leaf brewed correctly.

The Goldilocks point

This is why the answer across this cluster is "moderate", not "pure". Too hard mutes and films; too soft thins; zero mineral hollows. The target is a gentle middle, roughly 50 to 150 mg/L of total dissolved solids, which is exactly what a simple filter on ordinary water produces, see filtered water for tea.

The common misunderstanding

People in hard water areas sometimes reach for distilled to escape scale and muting. It is an over correction: you trade a muted cup for a hollow one. A filter, not distillation, is the right tool, see limescale and tea.

Where pure water belongs

Distilled water has its uses, in irons, humidifiers and car batteries, not kettles. For tea it is the wrong end of the scale. The same applies to heavily purified bottled water, see bottled water for tea.

Bottom line

Do not make tea with distilled or zero mineral water; it tastes flat and hollow because tea needs a little mineral to come alive. Aim for moderate, filtered water instead, see best water for tea.

Quick reference: Distilled water for tea

Field	Detail
What it is	Water with essentially all dissolved minerals removed via boiling and condensation
Mineral content	Near zero (around 0-5 mg/L total dissolved solids)
Common assumption	"Pure water is better for tea" because no mineral interference
Reality	Tea brewed in distilled water tastes flat, aromatically suppressed, and lacks body
Why	Some mineral content is needed for proper extraction chemistry; complete absence shifts solubility unfavourably
Tea-ideal mineral range	~50-150 mg/L total dissolved solids; low calcium (under 30 mg/L); low chlorine
How to fix distilled water for tea	Add trace mineral content (1g of mineral salts per litre); rarely worth the effort outside specialty brewing
Better alternative	Filtered tap water; reaches the right range automatically

Reverse osmosis is the same trap

Reverse-osmosis (RO) filtration strips water almost as bare as distillation, so RO water without remineralisation makes the same flat, thin tea. Some high-end taps (certain Quooker and Insinkerator units) include an RO stage; check the spec, because some remineralise and some do not. In an RO household, brewing from a separate carbon filter jug on the cold tap often gives a better cup than the RO output, even where the RO water is entirely fine to drink.

What to buy

For everyday brewing a Brita-style filter jug (£25 to £40) lands in the right mineral range automatically; Volvic is a low-mineral bottled fallback. If you brew with distilled or RO water by necessity, tea-water mineral drops add the trace minerals back, though that is specialty territory.

On the shopping side, see the English tea range and loose leaf range.

Reference noted

- NHS: Water, drinks and your health

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teas · Pick what you'll actually drink every day. A filtered tap water cup you reach for beats a pure water cup you only admire.

More water reading

For broader water context see the best water for tea guide and does water quality affect tea. For the filtration alternative see filtered water for tea. For bottled-water context see is bottled water better for tea. For tap-water context see is tap water OK for tea.

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