How to Clean a Teapot (Without Ruining It)

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **How to clean a teapot, in summary:** Cleaning a teapot is a flavour decision: hot water for glazed and glass, bicarbonate for stains, never detergent in seasoned clay, dry cast iron at once.

Cleaning a teapot is a flavour issue, not just cosmetics, because tannin film taints every future brew, with one deliberate exception. This sits in the teaware cluster beside choosing a teapot.

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

Why it matters for taste

Tea stain and tannin build a film that turns rancid tasting and bitter over time, quietly spoiling good tea. A neglected pot makes worse tea than a cheap clean one.

Everyday glazed and glass pots

Rinse after every use, and periodically clean with bicarbonate of soda and warm water, a soft brush, no harsh abrasives. Bicarb lifts tannin without scratching, see glass vs ceramic.

Stubborn staining

A bicarbonate paste left for a while, or a soak in warm water with bicarb, removes heavy tannin. For glass, the same; you will see the difference because glass shows it, see limescale and tea for scale.

Avoid strong detergent in the pot

Heavy washing up liquid can leave a residue that flavours tea, especially in porous or textured pots. Mild rinse and bicarb beats perfumed detergent for teaware.

The seasoned pot exception

Unglazed clay pots (Yixing) are deliberately kept for one tea family and never scrubbed with detergent; the built character is the point. Clean these with hot water only, see cast iron tetsubin.

Cast iron care

Enamel lined cast iron cleans like ceramic; bare cast iron must be dried thoroughly to prevent rust and never soaked. Know which lining you have before you clean.

Dry it properly

Store with the lid off so it dries fully; a damp closed pot grows a musty smell that ruins the next brew, see freshness principles.

Summary

Rinse always, bicarb regularly, mild not perfumed, dry lid off, and treat seasoned unglazed pots as the deliberate exception, see choosing a teapot.

Cleaning a teapot, at a glance

Pot type	Rule
Glazed/glass/porcelain	Hot water, soft brush; mild soap occasionally if needed, rinse well
Stubborn tannin stain	Bicarbonate of soda paste, not a scourer; rinse thoroughly
Seasoned clay (Yixing)	Hot water only, never detergent, the season is the point
Cast iron (tetsubin)	Rinse, never soak or scrub; dry immediately to stop rust
Always	Dry it fully before storing; trapped damp taints the next brew

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