How to Taste Tea (Step by Step)

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **How to taste tea, in summary:** Tasting tea is a method not a gift: smell dry then wet leaf, look, slurp to aerate, follow the sequence, feel texture, re-taste as it cools, note one line.

How to taste tea, as a method rather than a mystique: a short, repeatable routine that builds a real palate within weeks. This sits in the tasting cluster beside the tasting guide.

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

Smell the leaf, dry then wet

Start with the dry leaf aroma, then smell the warmed wet leaf after a short infusion. The wet leaf often telegraphs the cup, floral, malty, marine, before you taste anything.

Look at the liquor

Colour and clarity hint at oxidation and strength: pale gold for a delicate green, deep amber for a sturdy black. It is a quick predictor, not the verdict.

Slurp to aerate

Sip sharply so the tea sprays across the whole mouth and up behind the nose. This retronasal aeration is how professionals taste; it makes aroma, the bulk of flavour, vivid, see the flavour wheel.

Note the sequence

Attack (first impression), mid palate (body and main flavour), and finish (what lingers). Many teas are judged on a long, clean finish as much as the opening.

Feel the texture

Separately from taste, notice mouthfeel: thin or full, smooth or astringent, see astringency. Texture is a major part of quality.

Re taste as it cools

Tea changes as it cools; sweetness and faults both emerge. A tea that is still good lukewarm is usually a good tea, see faults.

Write one line

A single recorded sentence per tea builds memory and a personal reference faster than anything else. Comparison over time is where skill compounds.

The clear takeaway

Smell, look, slurp, track attack body finish, feel texture, re taste cool, note it. Repeat across similar teas and a palate forms quickly, see the tasting guide.

Tasting tea, step by step

Step	What to do
Smell the leaf	Dry, then wet after the first splash, two different aromas
Look	Colour and clarity of the liquor; clues to strength and style
Slurp	Aerate it across the palate, like wine, not a polite sip
Sequence	Note attack, mid-palate and finish separately
Texture & cooling	Feel the body; re-taste as it cools, flavours shift

The single fastest improvement to anyone's tasting is the slurp: it is the step people are most embarrassed to do and the one that adds the most information, putting the tea where your sense of smell can actually read it. The payoff of all this is not performance, it is better choosing and more pleasure for the same money, the same value-first idea the how to judge tea quality guide takes. Practise on contrasting pairs of the same type, an oolong or a green tea, from the English tea range and loose leaf range, or the full tea shop.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Taste what you like in the cup, whatever the shelf says you should prefer. Curiosity is the only reliable guide.

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