

# First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

**First flush vs second flush, in summary:** First flush vs second flush: the harvest round predicts the cup. First is bright and delicate, second full and muscatel. How to taste and buy each.

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

"Flush" is one of the most useful words in fine tea: it is the harvest round, and it predicts the cup. This sits in the tasting cluster beside [single origin vs blended](#).

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

## What flush means

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What flush means, First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

A flush is a flush of new growth the plant pushes out, harvested as a distinct picking. Successive flushes through the year taste meaningfully different from the same garden.

## First flush

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for First flush, First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

The first spring growth: typically bright, delicate, aromatic, lively and lighter bodied. Darjeeling first flush is the famous example, floral and brisk, prized and priced accordingly, see [Darjeeling flushes](#).

## Second flush

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Second flush, First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

Later growth: fuller, rounder, more mature and often "muscatel" in Darjeeling, less delicate but more bodied and, to many, more satisfying as a cup, see [black tea](#).

## Why they differ

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why they differ, First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

Growth speed, leaf maturity, temperature and the plant cycle change leaf chemistry between flushes, so terroir plus flush together set character, see [processing](#).

## Beyond Darjeeling

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Beyond Darjeeling, First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

Flush matters across many origins. Assam has a celebrated, rich, malty second flush; Nepalese gardens follow a similar spring-then-summer arc; and it maps conceptually onto Japanese shicha (first picked green) versus later harvests, see [shincha](#) and [umami](#).

## Which to choose

First flush for delicacy and aromatic complexity; second for body and rounded depth. Tasting them side by side is one of the best learning exercises in tea, see [how to taste tea](#).

## Quick take

Flush is the harvest round and a strong flavour predictor: first bright and delicate, second full and round. Knowing it lets you buy character on purpose, see [the tasting guide](#).

## First and second flush side by side

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

	First flush	Second flush
Season	First spring growth	Later growth (early summer)
Body	Lighter, lively	Fuller, rounder
Character	Bright, floral, aromatic	Mature, often muscatel
Darjeeling	Delicate, prized, dear	Muscatel, deeper, satisfying

	<b>First flush</b>	<b>Second flush</b>
Milk	No, drink clean	Usually no, can take a touch
Best for	Aromatic delicacy	Depth and weight

## Common questions

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Common questions, First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

**Is first flush better than second?** No. First is delicate and aromatic, second is full and round. Better depends on what you want from the cup.

**Why is Darjeeling first flush so expensive?** Small early yields, intense demand and short windows. Scarcity and prestige, not just quality, set the price.

**Can I put milk in either?** Generally no, especially first flush, which milk erases. Both are designed to be drunk clean.

**Does flush apply to green tea?** Conceptually yes: shicha is the first flush green, brighter than later harvests from the same garden.

## Buying and brewing each flush

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Buying and brewing each flush, First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

A first flush is delicate and fades fast, so freshness matters more than for a robust second flush: buy what you will drink while it is alive, keep it sealed, cool and dark, and treat the harvest date as information rather than decoration. Brew both just off the boil and drink them clean; a first flush brewed like a builders' tea reads as "weak" when it is simply different. On value, a characterful second flush is often the better buy than a prestige first flush, whose price is partly scarcity and demand rather than cup quality, so buy the flush whose character you actually want.

## The bottom line

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The bottom line, First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

Flush is the harvest round and a strong flavour predictor: first bright and delicate, second full and round. Knowing it lets you buy character on purpose rather than by guesswork. Browse [Darjeeling](#), [first flush teas](#) and the wider [black tea range](#) at [teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk), or the full [tea shop](#). Buy on the cup and the description, check the per cup price, and free UK delivery is over £35.

**FROM THE CURATOR** teas · Take the simplest thing on this page that fits your routine. Range and ritual are for week two.

## More tea reading

- [The history of tea](#)
- [Loose leaf vs teabag](#)
- [Tea tasting for beginners, explained](#)
- [Tea and caffeine](#)
- [Herbal tea](#)
- [Green tea](#)
- [Tea storage](#)
- [Tea ethics & sustainability](#)

## Worth picking up

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for First Flush vs Second Flush: What the Difference Tastes Like. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/first-flush-vs-second-flush/>*

## More from the tea wiki

- [Green tea](#)
- [Black tea](#)
- [Oolong tea](#)
- [White tea](#)
- [Herbal tea](#)
- [Caffeine in tea](#)
- [How to make tea properly](#)
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