How to Make Cold Brew Tea (Smooth and Sweet)

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **How to make cold brew tea, in summary:** Cold brew is leaf steeped in cold water in the fridge for hours: cold extraction means naturally smooth, sweet, low-bitterness tea. Not iced tea.

Cold brew is the most foolproof way to a smooth, sweet, low bitterness tea drink, because cold water simply does not extract the harsh compounds. Next to it in the tea making pages is how to make iced tea.

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

Why cold brew is so smooth

Cold water extracts flavour slowly and barely extracts the bitter tannins and some caffeine, so the result is naturally sweet, smooth and low astringency with almost no skill required. It is almost impossible to over steep into harshness.

The ratio

Roughly a tablespoon of loose leaf (or 1 to 2 bags) per 250 to 350ml of cold water; scale up in a jug. More leaf gives a stronger brew without bitterness, see iced tea for the hot route.

The method

Combine leaf and cold filtered water in a jug, refrigerate, steep 6 to 12 hours (green shorter, black and herbal longer), then strain. That is the whole technique, see water.

Timing by type

Green and white: 4 to 8 hours. Black and oolong: 8 to 12. Herbal and fruit: 8 to 12+. Longer is forgiving here because there is little bitterness to over extract.

Lower caffeine

Cold brew typically pulls less caffeine than hot brewing, which suits afternoon and evening drinking, see caffeine in tea.

Serving and keeping

Serve over ice, optionally with citrus, mint or fruit. Keep refrigerated and use within a couple of days; strain the leaf out so it does not over develop, see cold brew recipes.

In a sentence

Cold water, good leaf, fridge, 6 to 12 hours, strain. Cold brew is the lowest effort, highest reliability tea drink there is, see iced tea for when you want it fast.

Cold brew tea, at a glance

Element	Rule
Why smooth	Cold water extracts less tannin and caffeine, so it is sweet, not bitter
Ratio	Roughly the normal leaf dose into cold water, scale to taste
Method	Steep in the fridge, no heat at all
Timing	~6 to 12h by type; greens shorter, blacks longer
Caffeine	Lower than hot-brewed, a consequence of cold extraction

Related on the wiki: Tea for Summer: Cold Brew, Iced and Light.

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