

Sun Tea: The US Tradition and Safer Alternative

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Sun tea, in summary: Sun tea is US 1970s home-brewing in a glass jar in sunlight; gentle cup but bacterial-growth risk; fridge cold-brew is the safer alternative.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Sun Tea: The US Tradition and Safer Alternative. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/sun-tea/>*

Sun tea, steeping tea in a jar in sunlight, is a nostalgic summer method with a genuine safety footnote that honest guides should not skip. This sits in the tea making cluster beside [cold brew](#).

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

What sun tea is

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What sun tea is, Sun Tea: The US Tradition and Safer Alternative. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/sun-tea/>*

Tea steeped slowly in a covered jar of water left in the sun for a few hours, giving a mellow, mild brew warmer than cold brew but gentler than hot.

The safety caveat

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The safety caveat, Sun Tea: The US Tradition and Safer Alternative. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/sun-tea/>*

Sun tea sits at lukewarm temperatures that can let bacteria grow, especially over long periods or if the jar is not scrupulously clean. This is a real, commonly under stated point, not scaremongering, and it is not suitable for pregnant women, young children, the elderly or anyone immunocompromised, where the margin is too narrow.

How to do it more safely

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for How to do it more safely, Sun Tea: The US Tradition and Safer Alternative. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/sun-tea/>*

Use an immaculately clean jar, fresh cold filtered water, keep it to no more than 3 to 4 hours, refrigerate immediately after, drink the same day, and discard if it looks ropy or smells off.

The safer alternative

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The safer alternative, Sun Tea: The US Tradition and Safer Alternative. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/sun-tea/*

Cold brew in the fridge (around 4C) gives a very similar mellow, smooth result without the lukewarm growth risk, and is clearly the better default, see [cold brew](#).

If you make sun tea

Black or robust herbal, plenty of leaf, sealed jar, short sun time, then straight to the fridge and strain. Treat it as same day only, see [iced tea](#).

The flavour

Sun tea fans like its soft, rounded character; well made fridge cold brew is close and safer, see [cold brew guide](#).

In a sentence

Sun tea is pleasant nostalgia with a real lukewarm bacteria caveat; keep it clean, short and same day, or use fridge cold brew for the same result more safely, see [cold brew](#).

What you need to know: sun tea

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Aspect	Note
What it is	Tea brewed in glass jar in direct sunlight over hours
Origin	US 1970s home-brewing tradition; Americana
Method	Glass jar + cold water + 4-5 tea bags + 3-5 hours sun
Cup character	Gentle cold-brew with mild aromatic depth
Safety caveat	Water temp stays in 20-40C bacterial growth zone; risk
Safer alternative	Cold-brew in fridge overnight; 4C inhibits bacteria
UK applicability	Limited; UK sun rarely reaches sustained brewing temperature
Read	Nostalgic tradition; cold-brew is the safer alternative

For a cup that suits cold brewing, browse the [loose leaf range](#) or the full [tea shop](#).

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More tea reading

Continue with [cold brew tea](#), [how to make iced tea](#) and [how to make tea](#).

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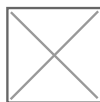
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