How to Choose Tea (By Character, Not Name)

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **How to choose tea, in summary:** Choose tea backwards from the character you want, light, brisk, floral, roasted, not forwards from a name.

The tea aisle overwhelms because it is sorted by name, not by taste. The shortcut is to choose by character. It is one of the getting started pages, next to tea for beginners.

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

Decide the character first

Before names, pick a direction: brisk and strong, light and fresh, smooth and malty, floral and aromatic, or caffeine free. That alone narrows hundreds of teas to a few, see the table below.

Use type as a map

Black = sturdy; green = fresh/vegetal; white = delicate; oolong = floral to roasted; herbal = caffeine free. Type predicts character fast, but treat it as a starting region not a verdict, see oxidation explained.

Read the tasting note, not the romance

Malty, brisk, full tells you more than a poetic name; if a description is all romance and no detail about taste and aroma, that absence is itself a signal. If there is no tasting note, infer from type and origin, see the glossary.

Match to the moment

Morning wants strength, afternoon balance, evening caffeine free. A tea you will drink at 8am with milk and one you will drink at 9pm caffeine free are different purchases, see building a collection.

Single origin to learn, blend to rely

Pick single origin to taste character and learn what you like, a blend for the consistent everyday cup, see single origin vs blended.

Caffeine and milk needs

If you need low caffeine or take milk, that narrows it further, milky drinkers want a sturdy black, see milk in tea and the caffeine guide.

Bottom line

Choose character, then type, then tasting note, then moment. Names are last. A simple test stops most regretted buys: refuse to buy until you can finish "I want something that tastes ___ for ___" with words about taste and aroma and a real occasion, see tea for beginners.

Choosing tea by character, at a glance

Decide	Rule
Character first	Light/fresh, brisk/malty, floral, roasted, earthy, decide the mood
Type as a map	Use green/black/oolong as a guide to character, not a verdict
Read the note	Trust the tasting note, not the romantic packaging copy
Match the moment	Morning lift vs evening caffeine-free are different choices
Origin vs blend	Single origin to learn, blend to rely on day to day

Stock up by character from the English tea range and the loose-leaf range. Browse the full tea shop; free UK delivery is over £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Freshness beats provenance for most drinkers. Buy a smaller bag more often.

More tea reading

- How to get into tea
- How to taste tea
- How to make tea
- Loose leaf vs tea bags

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly

- Loose leaf vs teabag

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