The Tea Pairing Chart (How to Actually Use It)

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea pairing chart, in summary:** A UK tea pairing chart: which teas go with which foods, the matching-or-contrasting principle, how astringency cuts rich food.

A tea pairing chart looks like a rulebook and is really a starting point for one simple principle. Here is the chart and, more usefully, how to use it. This sits at the centre of the pairing cluster beside tea and food pairings.

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

The principle first

Match intensity, then echo or contrast flavour. Two tools do most of the work: astringency (tannin) in strong tea cuts through fatty, rich food (cheese, smoked salmon, buttery scones); aromatic top notes in flavoured tea (Earl Grey's bergamot, jasmine's florals) echo similar notes in food (lemon desserts, floral cakes). Every row of any chart is an application of that, which is why the principle matters more than memorising the grid, see the chart below.

Black tea

Robust, astringent: pairs with rich, sweet, fatty and baked food, breakfast, cake, cheese, chocolate. The great all rounder, see tea with cake.

Green tea

Fresh, low astringency: pairs with light, savoury, marine and vegetal food, sushi, salads, steamed dishes, see tea with sushi and what to eat with green tea.

Oolong

Floral to roasted: lighter oolong with fruit and pastry, roasted oolong with grilled and savoury, a versatile middle, see oolong.

White tea

Delicate: only with very light, subtle food, or alone, anything rich erases it, see white tea.

Chai and spiced

Warm spice: pairs with spiced bakes, curry, autumnal and sweet spiced food, see tea with curry.

Herbal

By character: mint with chocolate, fruit with desserts, camomile with light bakes; pair the dominant note, see tea and dessert.

What it boils down to

Use the chart to start, then weight match and decide echo or contrast. The principle, not the grid, makes you good at pairing, see the tasting guide.

In short: Tea pairing chart

Tea type	Pairs well with
Strong black tea (Assam, English Breakfast)	Bacon sandwiches, fry-ups, scones with jam, fruit cake, digestive biscuits, Cheddar cheese
Earl Grey	Lemon drizzle cake, shortbread, smoked salmon, Victoria sponge, lemon tart
Green tea (sencha, longjing)	Sushi, sashimi, steamed dumplings, rice dishes, light fish, fresh fruit
Light oolong (Tieguanyin)	Dim sum, mild cheeses, almond biscuits, light salads, summer fruits
Dark oolong (Da Hong Pao)	Roasted nuts, dark chocolate, smoked meats, Chinese roasted duck
White tea	Fresh fruits, light pastries, delicate biscuits, vanilla desserts
Chai and spiced	Indian sweets (gulab jamun, kulfi), spiced biscuits, curry dishes, gingerbread
Herbal (mint, chamomile)	Light evening snacks, oat-based biscuits, end-of-meal closers
Pu-erh	Rich meats, dim sum, dark chocolate, savoury cheeses

What to buy to explore pairings

Build a small range across categories and test the chart for yourself. Black for rich and baked food: Yorkshire Tea or a strong English Breakfast. Citrus echoes: Earl Grey with lemon bakes. Light and savoury food: green tea; delicate fruit and pastry: white tea. Spiced bakes and curry: masala chai. After-dinner closers: peppermint and chamomile. Browse the full tea shop; free UK delivery is over £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Start cheap, stay cheap until something stops you. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

More tea reading

- Tea and food pairings
- What tea with breakfast
- Tea with cake
- Practical tea tasting guide

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

Earn rewards on teas.co.uk

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/