Is Microwaved Tea Bad?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Is microwaved tea bad, in summary:** No, microwaved tea is not harmful, it is usually just worse tea: uneven heat and rarely a proper boil.

A real transatlantic culture clash question with a simple answer. In the tea myths pages it sits close to why tea tastes different abroad.

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

Microwaved tea, at a glance

Question	The answer
Bad for you?	No; microwaving water is not harmful, it is a flavour and method issue
Why it is worse	Uneven heat and rarely a proper rolling boil, so under extracted, flat tea
Superheating	Real but rare physics caveat: water can erupt; heat with something in the cup
Acceptable when	Reheating an already-brewed cup, fine if not ideal
Best practice	A kettle to a proper boil; the microwave is a fallback, not a method

Not bad for you, just worse tea

The clear answer separates a health claim from a quality one. There is no evidence that microwaving water or tea is harmful, so "microwaved tea is bad" is a myth in the health sense; this is general information rather than medical advice. What is true is that it usually makes worse tea, for a specific mechanical reason: a microwave heats water unevenly and rarely brings it to the vigorous rolling boil that black tea in particular needs for proper extraction, so the cup is often under extracted, flat and slightly off compared with a kettle brewed one, see water temperature. The one physics caveat that matters is superheating: water heated in a very smooth container can briefly exceed boiling point without visibly bubbling and then erupt when disturbed, a real if uncommon scald risk, avoided simply by not overheating and by heating with the teabag or a non metallic stirrer in the cup so there is a nucleation site.

The cultural angle, and best practice

"Never microwave tea" is held with a conviction the actual risk does not justify, and most of the objection is cultural: in strong tea cultures the kettle and the deliberate making of tea are part of the pleasure, so

microwaving reads as a small disrespect rather than a hazard, a legitimate aesthetic preference that should be named as one rather than dressed up as science. The defensible objection is purely quality, the flatter cup, see why tea is better in England. So best practice is simple and unsnobbish: use a kettle to a proper boil when you can, because it makes better tea; reheating an already brewed cup in the microwave is entirely fine; and if a microwave is all you have, heat the water hot with the cup not bone dry and the bag or a stirrer in it, steep a touch longer to make up for the missing boil, and accept a slightly flatter but entirely safe cup, see how to make tea properly.

What to buy

Brew it properly with leaf from the black tea range or the green tea range, or browse the full tea shop; free UK delivery over £35.

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (beverage)

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