

## How Tea Customs Differ Around the World

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

**How tea customs differ around the world, in summary:** A UK guide to global tea customs: Turkish glasses, Moroccan mint, Indian chai, Japanese ceremony, Hong Kong milk tea. One leaf, a hundred rituals.

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for How Tea Customs Differ Around the World. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-tea-parties-differ-around-the-world/>*

"A cup of tea" means something completely different depending where you are standing. This sits at the centre of the world tea culture cluster beside [Persian tea culture](#).

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

### What you need to know: how tea customs differ globally

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What you need to know: how tea customs differ globally, How Tea Customs Differ Around the World. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-tea-parties-differ-around-the-world/>*

Region/style	Tea custom
Britain	English Breakfast, milk and sugar to taste, mug, frequent
Turkey	Strong black, no milk, sugar, tulip glasses, çaydanlık double-pot, all day
Iran (Persian)	Strong black, no milk, with sugar cube held in teeth, samovar tradition
Morocco/North Africa	Gunpowder green with mint and sugar, poured from height into glasses, three-glass ceremony
Senegal/Mauritania (Attaya)	Three rounds of green-mint tea, each progressively sweeter, social ritual
India/Pakistan	Masala chai (spiced black with milk, simmered), street-vendor staple, several daily
China	Gongfu cha (multiple short infusions of premium loose-leaf), aesthetic, scholarly
Japan	Chanoyu (formal ceremony with matcha), discipline, spiritual focus

Region/style	Tea custom
Hong Kong	Strong black with evaporated/condensed milk; cafe staple ("yuanyang" if mixed with coffee)
Russia	Samovar tradition; tea concentrate diluted with hot water; with lemon and jam
United States	Mostly iced tea (sweetened South, unsweetened elsewhere); hot tea minority
Tibet	Butter tea (po cha): black tea, yak butter, salt, churned for highland calories

## The five families of tea ritual

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The five families of tea ritual, How Tea Customs Differ Around the World. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-tea-parties-differ-around-the-world/>*

Behind the dozen entries in the table sit a handful of repeating families. The strong-glass-tea belt runs across Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and Central Asia: strong black brewed long, served in small clear glasses with sugar and no milk, offered constantly as hospitality, and it produces the world's heaviest consumption (Turkey leads at about 3.5kg a head a year), see [Turkish](#) and [Persian](#) tea culture. The mint-and-sugar tradition of North and West Africa brews Chinese gunpowder green strong with fresh mint and plenty of sugar, poured from a height to aerate it into a foam, often as a three-glass ceremony, "the first bitter as life, the second strong as love, the third gentle as death", see [Senegalese attaya](#). South Asia simmers masala chai, black tea boiled together with milk, sugar and spice rather than steeped then dressed, a street-vendor and home staple drunk several times a day, see [Pakistani chai](#) and [Indian tea culture](#). East Asia keeps the refined craft traditions, Japanese chanoyu with whisked matcha and structured choreography, and Chinese gongfu cha with multiple short infusions of premium leaf in tiny vessels, see [Japanese](#) and [Chinese](#) tea culture. And the cafe condensed-milk style of Hong Kong brews a strong Ceylon blend with evaporated or condensed milk, the cha chaan teng staple, with the coffee-and-milk-tea "yuanyang" as its famous variant, see [Hong Kong milk tea](#).

## Why the map matters

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why the map matters, How Tea Customs Differ Around the World. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-tea-parties-differ-around-the-world/>*

The variation is not superficial: the same plant produces genuinely different drinks, vessels, sweetness, milk and etiquette, while the one constant everywhere is hospitality, tea as the thing you offer a guest. Knowing the map helps in three plain ways: it makes travel smoother, since you will be offered tea in many countries and understanding what is coming reduces social friction (a refusal can read as unfriendly in the glass-tea belt); it is a quick read on how a culture handles welcome and contemplation; and it cures the parochial assumption that "tea is X", because X depends entirely on where you are standing, see [American tea culture](#) and [British tea culture](#).

## What to buy

Taste the map: a robust [English Breakfast](#) for the British and glass-tea styles, [gunpowder green](#) with mint for North Africa, a [masala chai](#) for South Asia, and [matcha](#) or a premium [oolong](#) for the East Asian craft traditions. Browse the full [tea shop](#); free UK delivery over £35.

## Reference noted

- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for How Tea Customs Differ Around the World. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-tea-parties-differ-around-the-world/>*

**FROM THE CURATOR** teas · Free UK delivery starts at £35, which is two or three good bags. Build a small order rather than a single splurge.

## Tea-culture reading

- [Turkish tea culture](#)
- [Indian tea culture](#)
- [Japanese tea culture](#)
- [Hong Kong milk tea](#)

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for How Tea Customs Differ Around the World. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-tea-parties-differ-around-the-world/>*

## 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**

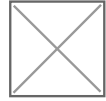
Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



**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/](https://teas.co.uk/cancel/)