

Senegalese Attaya: The West African Three Glass Ritual

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Senegalese attaya, in summary: Senegalese attaya is the West African three-glass tea ritual; gunpowder green, bitter-sweet-sugary progression, aerating pour, hours-long.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Senegalese Attaya: The West African Three-Glass Ritual. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/senegalese-attaya/>*

In Senegal and across West Africa, attaya is a slow social ceremony, not a quick drink. This sits in the world tea culture cluster beside [how customs differ](#).

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

The essentials: Senegalese attaya

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The essentials: Senegalese attaya, Senegalese Attaya: The West African Three-Glass Ritual. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/senegalese-attaya/>*

Aspect	The note
What it is	Senegalese (and broader West African) three-glass tea ritual
Tea base	Chinese gunpowder green tea; historically imported
Three glasses	Bitter (life), sweet (love), sugary (death/family)
Pour from height	Aerating pour for the foamy crown
Sugar levels	Heavy; the signature of the ritual
Social function	Hours-long; the Senegalese gathering rhythm
Mint variant	Mint-leaves-added; relates to Moroccan green-tea tradition
UK access	Gunpowder green widely-available; ritual at home achievable

The three-glass progression

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The three-glass progression, Senegalese Attaya: The West African Three-Glass Ritual. Canonical:*

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Each of the three glasses carries a different meaning and a different cup. The first, "bitter as life", is the strongest brew with minimal sugar, intentionally bracing and astringent, sipped while the host opens the conversation. The second, "sweet as love", is re-brewed from the same leaf with sugar added, a sweet-and-strong cup for the warmth of relationships, by which point the guests have settled into the ritual. The third, "sugary as death" or "sugary as family" depending on the regional reading, is re-brewed once more with heavy sugar into the sweetest cup, as the conversation reaches its most relaxed. The whole sequence runs two to four hours: a structured social and philosophical ritual rather than just a tea-drinking session.

The pour from height (kessa)

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The pour from height (kessa), Senegalese Attaya: The West African Three-Glass Ritual. Canonical:*

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The signature gesture is the pour from height: the server holds the small pot 30 to 50cm above a heat-proof glass and pours a thin stream so the tea aerates as it falls, building a thick foamy crown called the kessa. It does three jobs at once, cooling the tea to drinking temperature, developing the foam that improves the texture, and demonstrating the server's skill, since experienced hands can pour dozens of glasses without spilling. A good kessa is a centimetre or two thick, creamy and stable for several minutes; a poor one is thin and dies quickly, and the knack takes months of practice, see [the Moroccan pour](#).

Cousin to Moroccan mint tea

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Cousin to Moroccan mint tea, Senegalese Attaya: The West African Three-Glass Ritual. Canonical:*

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Attaya and Moroccan mint tea are closely related cousins rather than the same drink. Both use Chinese gunpowder green imported along trans-Saharan trade routes, both lean heavily on sugar, both use small heat-proof glasses, and both use the aerating pour with a foam crown. The differences: Moroccan mint tea always includes fresh mint, while attaya may or may not depending on the household; Moroccan tea is served at any time across brief social moments, while attaya is specifically the three-glass, hours-long ritual; and Moroccan mint is the more internationally known, while attaya remains more anchored in West African and diaspora households, see [the Mauritanian ritual](#).

Attaya at home

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The ritual is achievable with modest kit: a small metal teapot, a few small heat-proof glasses, Chinese gunpowder green, sugar, and optional mint. Boil the water in the pot, add a couple of tablespoons of gunpowder green with a little sugar and simmer about five minutes, then pour the first round from height,

bitter; refill the pot with fresh water and more sugar, simmer and pour the second, sweeter; refill again with the most sugar for the third, sweetest. The full sequence is an hour or more, served to a few guests across an unhurried afternoon, the West African rhythm rather than a quick cup, see [how customs differ](#).

What to buy

Source the base from the [gunpowder green range](#) and the kit from the [teaware range](#), or browse the full [tea shop](#); free UK delivery over £35.

Reference noted

- [Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea \(beverage\)](#)

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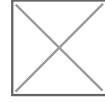
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