

International Tea Day, Explained

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

International Tea Day, in summary: International Tea Day is 21 May, designated by the UN to recognise tea's economic and cultural role for producing countries and workers, not a sales event.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for International Tea Day, Explained. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/international-tea-day/>*

International Tea Day is the global, UN-backed counterpart to the UK's own day. This sits in the tea calendar cluster beside [National Tea Day UK](#).

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

International Tea Day, at a glance

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Question	The answer
When	21 May, the UN-designated International Tea Day
Why	UN recognition of tea's economic and cultural role for producing countries
Earlier date	An earlier 15 December date, producer-led, predates the UN one
vs UK day	Different from the informal UK "tea day"; international not national
Purpose	Awareness of tea workers and sustainable production, not a marketing event

Why the UN created it, and the two dates

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why the UN created it, and the two dates, International Tea Day, Explained. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/international-tea-day/>*

The detail most mentions skip is that there are two International Tea Days. The original was a producer-led observance on 15 December, launched in the early 2000s by tea-producing countries and trade-union and civil-society groups to draw attention to the conditions of tea workers and the economics of smallholder production. The one most people now mean is 21 May, formally designated by the United Nations General

Assembly in 2019, which gave the occasion official global standing through the FAO. The UN date exists because tea is not just a drink but a livelihood for millions, a major export and employment crop for several developing economies, so the day is meant to focus governments and consumers on sustainable production, fair conditions and the value chain behind the cup rather than to sell more tea, see [is tea sustainable](#). The two dates share a goal rather than compete: the December one grassroots and producer-led, the May one official and UN-backed.

How it differs from a national tea day, and how to mark it

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for How it differs from a national tea day, and how to mark it, International Tea Day, Explained. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/international-tea-day/>*

The distinction worth labouring, because almost every casual mention blurs it, is between an intergovernmental observance and a marketing one. International Tea Day (21 May) is a UN designation, led in practice by the Food and Agriculture Organization, existing to put producing countries, smallholder farmers and tea-sector workers on the global agenda alongside the sustainability and price pressures that affect them. An informal "national tea day", by contrast, is typically a brand, retailer or social-media occasion celebrating the pleasure of drinking tea, with no official status and no producer focus, see [National Tea Day UK](#). Both can be enjoyable; only one is about the people behind the cup, and conflating them quietly converts a workers-and-sustainability day into a sales hook. The genuinely meaningful consumer response is not a themed discount but a small shift in attention: know the origin of what you drink, value transparent sourcing, and treat provenance as the relevant gesture, because that is what the day is actually about.

What to buy

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What to buy, International Tea Day, Explained. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/international-tea-day/>*

Mark it with a tea worth knowing: a transparently sourced single-origin [black tea](#) or [green tea](#), or browse the full [tea shop](#); free UK delivery over £35.

Reference noted

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Reference noted, International Tea Day, Explained. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/international-tea-day/>*

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

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · The cup you finish is the right cup. Skip the variety until that one is sorted.

Tea-culture reading

- [History of tea](#)
- [Is tea sustainable](#)
- [History of British tea](#)
- [National Tea Day UK](#)

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- [How to make tea properly](#)
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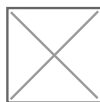
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Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

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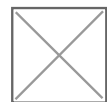
Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



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