The Ultimate Guide to Making Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Making tea, in summary:** Making tea: water, temperature, time, quantity beat brand. Black 95-100C 3-5min; green 70-80C 1-2min; loose-leaf upgrade big quality jump.

This is the master answer to "how do I make tea properly", with links down to every detail. This anchors the mega guide cluster beside how to brew every type of tea.

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

Quick reference: how to make tea properly

Variable	The rule
Water	Fresh from tap, well-aerated, not reboiled; bottled spring water in hard-water areas
Temperature: black tea	Near-boiling (95-100C); fierce rolling boil into pot or mug
Temperature: green tea	70-80C; off-boil and cool briefly
Temperature: white/oolong	80-90C; adjust to tea type
Temperature: herbal/Pu-erh	Near-boiling (95-100C)
Time: black tea	3-5 minutes; longer for strong builder's; shorter for delicate Darjeeling
Time: green tea	1-2 minutes; over-steeping produces bitterness
Time: white tea	3-5 minutes; gentle and longer
Leaf quantity	1 teaspoon per cup loose-leaf; 1 bag per cup for bagged
Leaf format upgrade	Loose-leaf vs standard bags is the single biggest quality jump
Milk and sugar	Personal preference; not moral; both options valid

The four variables beat the brand

"How do I make tea properly" has one core answer: four things matter most, water quality, brewing temperature, steeping time and leaf quantity, and they beat brand selection every time. The same teabag brewed properly in good water produces a dramatically better cup than a premium tea brewed badly, see how to make tea properly. Most British drinkers neglect these basics because mainstream bags are forgiving

and the big brands give an acceptable cup across a wide brewing range, but the jump from "acceptable" to "really good" comes from fixing the four basics, not from buying dearer tea. The headline temperatures are simple: near-boiling (95 to 100C) for black, herbal and Pu-erh; cooler (70 to 80C) for green and white to avoid scorching the delicate compounds; 80 to 90C in between for oolong. On time, steep to the type rather than the clock, three to five minutes for black, one to two for green, and remember that over-steeping, not strength, is what makes tea harsh, see troubleshooting.

Water, and the loose-leaf upgrade

Tea is roughly 98% water, so water quality dominates the cup. Use fresh, well-aerated tap water, not water reboiled and gone flat, and in hard-water areas (London, the South East, parts of Wales) the calcium and magnesium dull the brew, so a filter jug or low-mineral bottled water gives a noticeably brighter cup; soft-water areas can use the tap as is, see best water for tea. The single biggest quality upgrade most drinkers can make, though, is leaf format: supermarket bags contain fannings, the smallest fastest-brewing fragments, while loose leaf keeps larger leaf with more depth, at a comparable per-cup cost and needing only a small basket infuser, see loose leaf vs tea bags. Plastic-free whole-leaf pyramid bags are a fair middle step if you do not want an infuser.

Milk, sugar and the equipment that matters

Milk-first versus tea-first, sugar-or-not, lemon-with-tea, these are all preference rather than objective right-or-wrong; the chemistry difference is minor, milk-first is the traditional working-class habit and tea-first the middle-class one, both valid, see milk in tea. On equipment, a short priority order handles almost everything: first a kettle that reaches a proper rolling boil (a variable-temperature one is worthwhile mainly for serious green or white drinkers); second a roomy stainless-steel basket infuser, the cheapest single quality upgrade there is; third a decent teapot with a built-in strainer for serving several cups. Those three cover about 95% of tea-making, and anything beyond, a gaiwan, a matcha whisk, scales, is enthusiast territory rather than necessary.

What to buy

Make the big upgrade once: a mid-tier loose-leaf tea and a basket infuser turn any reasonable leaf into a proper cup. Browse a Darjeeling, an Assam or the wider black tea range, or the full tea shop; free UK delivery over £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · For making tea well, one good loose leaf brewed in a clean pot beats five unusual bags gulped down.

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- How to make tea properly
- Best water for tea
- Ideal water temperatures
- How to brew every type of tea

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