Tulsi (Holy Basil) Tea, Explained

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tulsi (holy basil) tea, in summary:** An aromatic Ayurvedic herbal with preliminary stress research and a few specific safety caveats. A pleasant tisane, not a treatment.

Tulsi, or holy basil, is one of the more pleasant and gentle functional herbals. It sits in the functional cluster alongside ashwagandha tea.

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

> ***Important:*** *general information, not medical advice. This is a functional botanical, not true tea and not a treatment. Some interactions and conditions apply (see below); check with a pharmacist or GP before medicinal use, and stop if you react.*

Aspect	The answer
What it is	Infusion of holy basil (Ocimum tenuiflorum); a revered Ayurvedic herb
Caffeine	Caffeine-free; not true tea (Camellia sinensis)
Traditional use	Ayurvedic "rasayana" for stress, immunity, respiratory comfort
Flavour	Aromatic, peppery, clove-like; pleasant plain, no sweetener needed
Evidence	Preliminary human research on stress markers; modest, not conclusive
Varieties	Rama (green), Krishna (purple), Vana (wild)
Brew	90-100C, 5-7 min; can re-infuse 2-3 times
Caveat	Check if pregnant, trying to conceive, on blood thinners or diabetes drugs

What it is, and the evidence

Tulsi is an infusion of holy basil (Ocimum tenuiflorum), a herb revered in Ayurveda as a "rasayana" or rejuvenative and given a place in Indian household and religious ritual that few culinary herbs reach. It is a caffeine-free tisane, related to culinary basil but a distinct species, and not true tea. On the science: tulsi is one of the better-studied Ayurvedic herbs, with small human trials suggesting modest reductions in subjective stress and some cortisol markers over several weeks, plus a modest signal on fasting glucose. That is genuinely interesting but preliminary, not definitive: tulsi is not a stress, diabetes or immunity treatment, though it may have modest supportive effects worth further study. See tea myths debunked.

The safety caveats that matter

Most adults drinking one or two cups a day face minimal risk, but tulsi has specific cautions worth keeping in view rather than glossing for marketing. Pregnancy: traditional texts and some animal studies caution against medicinal doses, so pregnant women should avoid them. Trying to conceive: animal research suggests possible fertility effects, so it is prudent to avoid concentrated consumption. Blood thinners: tulsi may have mild anticoagulant effects, so check if you take warfarin or similar. Diabetes medication: it may modestly lower blood glucose, so monitor and discuss with your prescriber. Thyroid: some emerging signals warrant a conversation if you take thyroid medication. Medicinal doses and supplements, as opposed to a daily cup, are where a pharmacist check matters most.

How it tastes, brews, and how to approach it

Tulsi has a distinctive aromatic, peppery, clove-like flavour, warming and pleasant plain without sweetener, and it does not turn bitter with a longer steep. Brew dried leaves at 90 to 100C for five to seven minutes and re-steep two or three times; Rama is the most accessible variety, Krishna more pungent, Vana more aromatic. It pairs well with ginger, lemon or honey, and cold brew gives a smoother, less peppery cup. Approach it as a genuinely enjoyable everyday herbal: if it gives you a modest stress-resilience benefit that is a welcome bonus, but drink it for the cup, not the "miracle adaptogen" framing. See herbal tea.

What to buy

Try a loose-leaf or bagged tulsi, a tulsi-and-ginger blend, or the wider herbal range; organic sourcing is worth it given pesticide-intensive growing regions. Browse the full tea shop. Buy on the cup and the per cup price, never the marketing; free UK delivery is over £35.

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (beverage)

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