DIY Boba Kit: What to Expect

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **DIY boba kit, in summary:** A home kit does the job and costs less than shop bought boba, and you get to set the sugar. The catch is that pearls must be cooked fresh and used the same day.

Home boba kits are popular gifts. This sits in the bubble-tea cluster beside brown sugar boba.

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

What's in a kit

A typical kit is dried or quick-cook tapioca pearls, a syrup or sugar, sometimes a tea powder, and wide straws. It does work, it costs a lot less than buying a cup out, and its main advantage is one cafés seldom offer: you decide how sweet it is. The wide straws are the only specialist item you actually need; everything else is a normal kitchen. The drink it makes is bubble tea.

Element	Detail
Tapioca pearls	dried or quick-cook; must be boiled and used fresh, they harden within hours
Syrup / sugar	the sweetener; at home you set the level rather than inheriting a cafe default
Tea	sometimes a powder; a strong brewed black or green base is far better
Wide straws	for the pearls; the only specialist item you really need

Fresh pearls are the whole game

The pearl step is the single thing that decides whether a home boba is good or sad, and it is the thing the format makes hard. Cooked correctly, tapioca pearls are springy with a faint give; under-cooked they have a hard chalky centre; over-cooked they collapse to paste. Even a well cooked batch turns unpleasantly hard within a few hours as the starch sets, which is why a busy bubble tea bar tastes best, its pearls only minutes old, and why cooking in the morning for the evening does not work. The method that follows is unambiguous: cook only as many pearls as you will drink within an hour or two, follow the kit's boil-and-rest timing rather than guessing, keep them warm in a little of their syrup rather than fridge-cold, and accept that leftover cooked pearls are a write-off. See boba pearls for the detail.

Building the drink, and the sugar

Once the pearls are sorted, the rest is simple and forgiving. The classic build is a strong tea base, milk tea or fruit tea, sweetened to taste and poured over the fresh warm pearls and ice. For a milk tea, brew a black or oolong base far stronger than you would drink it, because the milk and melting ice will dilute it, then sweeten the warm base so the sugar actually dissolves. For a fruit tea, a green or jasmine base with real fruit or a measured syrup keeps it lighter. Two universal rules apply: the drink is only as good as the tea underneath it, so a flat powder undermines the whole thing, and you must brew strong by using more leaf rather than over-steeping, which only adds bitterness. The real home win is the sugar: at home that number is yours to set, not a dessert-grade default you were surprised by. See how to make iced tea for the base.

Is a kit worth it?

For the right person, yes. If you drink bubble tea regularly, a kit pays for itself quickly against shop prices and removes the single biggest complaint, an unknown and usually large sugar load. If you only want it once, a café is easier and the kit will gather dust. The deciding factor is frequency, and how willing you are to cook pearls fresh every time instead of treating them as a cupboard item, because stale cooked pearls are the quickest route to deciding a kit did not work when the method was at fault. It will not match a specialist bar like for like and does not need to; a fresher pearl and a sugar level you chose are the real wins.

Want to buy a good one?

A kit is only as good as the tea you build it on. Browse the black tea range, the green tea range or the full tea shop. For the base, let the tea in the cup and the cost of each cup decide it, and UK delivery is free over £35.

Browse the tea range

Reference noted

- PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health

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