Grandpa Style: Loose Leaf in a Mug, All Day

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Grandpa-style brewing, in summary:** Loose leaf left in a mug and topped up all day. The least fussy loose leaf method, really good with forgiving whole leaf, and quietly bad with broken or very astringent tea.

The least fussy loose leaf method there is, and a very good one. This sits in the brewing cluster beside western vs gongfu.

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

What it is, and why it works

The method is almost nothing, which is the point: put loose leaf directly in a large mug or glass, add hot (not always boiling) water, drink it down slowly, and top up with more hot water before it runs dry so it re-infuses through the day. It works because good whole leaf settles and stops giving much once it has released its first rounds, so it self-regulates in a way bagged or broken tea cannot, the opposite of what you would expect from leaf left sitting in water. The whole trick is restraint: a modest amount of leaf, hot but gentle water, topped up before it dries out, drunk unhurried over a long session rather than as a fast strong mug. See loose leaf tea.

Which teas suit it

Choose the leaf for the method. Forgiving whole-leaf greens, lighter oolongs and some blacks reward it, because they settle and hold something back. Very astringent or broken teas, and fine powders, do not: they over-steep and turn bitter sitting in the cup, so this is not a method for everything. Pick a forgiving whole leaf and it rewards you all day for no effort; force a delicate, broken or dust-grade tea through it and it punishes you. See the troubleshooting guide if a cup turns bitter.

Method	Kit	Best for	Watch out for
One cup brewing	mug + large basket infuser + lid	a clean single cup, leaf removed on time	must lift the infuser out, no pot to decant
No equipment / office	just a cup and hot water	travel, the office, proving leaf beats kit	needs a saucer pour off to stop it

Method	Kit	Best for	Watch out for
Grandpa style	a mug, nothing else	all day forgiving leaf, topped up	broken or very astringent leaf turns bitter

Where it fits, and the no-pot alternatives

Grandpa style is the everyday working method across much of China precisely because it is unpretentious, needs no equipment and asks almost no attention. It belongs in the brewing family beside western and gongfu as simply a third deliberate setting of the same dials: no apparatus, leaf left to self-regulate, attention minimal. It is the casual all-day end of the no-pot trio, with the bare-cup office method its travel cousin and one-cup basket brewing its tidier relative, and the right way to choose is by situation rather than by any one being more correct. It will never match a careful gongfu session for nuance or a timed one-cup brew for precision, and it is not meant to; its whole value is the absence of fuss with a leaf chosen to forgive it. See Chinese tea culture.

Want to buy a good one?

Keep a forgiving whole-leaf green or lighter oolong for it. Browse the full tea shop or the loose leaf range, go by how the cup tastes and how it is priced, and UK delivery is free over £35.

Browse the tea range

Worth picking up: the English tea range and loose leaf range.

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teas · Start with the simplest thing here: leaf in a mug. Fine leaf and fancier kit can wait until week two.

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