Cost Per Cup: The Only Fair Tea Value Test

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Cost per cup, in summary:** Pack price hides the real cost. Cost per cup, counting re-steeps and waste, is the only fair way to compare tea value, and it answers nearly every money question in one calculation.

The single most useful money skill in tea is calculating cost per cup. This anchors the value cluster beside cheapest tea per cup.

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

Why pack price misleads

A "cheap" big box and a "dear" small pouch can cost the same or less per cup, so pack price alone tells you almost nothing, the point the own brand vs branded guide turns on. The only fair figure is price divided by the cups the pack actually makes: roughly the bag count for bags, and for loose leaf, weight divided by the leaf you use per cup. Pack price is the figure the aisle works hardest to make you look at, precisely because the real per-cup number so often disagrees with it.

The method in one place

Factor	How it works
The formula	price divided by cups it actually makes; bags ~= bag count, loose = weight / leaf per cup
Re-steeps	whole leaf that gives several infusions multiplies the cup count, slashing true cost
Waste	tea you do not drink is infinite cost per cup; freshness and storage are value
Shipping	add a share of delivery and any free-shipping threshold to an online order
Pack price	almost meaningless on its own; the figure the aisle works hardest to hide

The two factors people ignore

Two things swing the number far more than most people expect, and both are routinely overlooked. The first is re-steeping: good whole leaf that gives several infusions is several teas for the price of one, which is why the instinct that loose leaf is dearer is so often wrong, the maths the re-steeping guide sets out. The second is waste: tea you bought and did not drink, because it went stale, was stored badly or you simply did not like it, has an effective cost of infinity, so bulk buying only saves if it is stored well and drunk fresh, the value

point the storage guide makes. Method and storage save more money than shopping ever does.

The thirty-second check

Reduced to something you can do on a product page: take the price, divide by the cups the pack realistically makes, and for whole leaf multiply by the re-steeps it gives, then judge that figure rather than the front-of-pack number. Add a share of any delivery cost, and right-size the purchase to what you will finish fresh, because anything that goes stale is infinite cost. That one calculation answers every value question at once: whether loose leaf is really dearer, whether a premium earns its markup, whether a subscription is discovery rather than economy, whether the own-brand dupe is the smart buy.

Premium, subscriptions and own brand

This is deliberately not a "never pay for good tea" position. Paying more can still be good value: whole leaf that takes several steeps and tastes markedly better can beat premium bags on cost per cup and be the nicer drink, and spending more on a tea you love is a fair choice, provided you make it knowingly. Equally a premium can be pure markup, where packaging and vague "ceremonial" language add price without adding anything to the cup. The two are told apart by the arithmetic and a blind taste, not the price tag. Own brand is usually a smart, near-identical save for everyday tea, though a distinctive blend is harder to replicate, so "dupe" is a claim to blind-test rather than assume. A subscription is a purchase of discovery and convenience, not the lowest cost per cup, the trade-off the subscription guide weighs.

Common questions

What is the cost-per-cup formula? Price divided by the cups the pack actually makes. Bags are roughly the bag count; loose is weight divided by leaf per cup.

Why does it favour loose leaf? Good whole leaf re-steeps several times, so one measure makes several cups, which often beats bags despite a higher pack price.

Does waste really count? Yes. Tea you never drink is infinite cost per cup, so freshness, storage and right-sizing the pack are real savings.

Should I include delivery? For online orders, yes. Add a share of delivery and weigh any free-shipping threshold into the real per-cup figure.

Do the maths, then buy the winner

Run the cost-per-cup check across the loose leaf range or the full tea shop. Buy on the real per-cup figure rather than the front-of-pack price, and free UK delivery is over £35.

Browse the tea range

Reference noted

- PubMed: Tea consumption and cardiovascular outcomes meta-analysis

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Pick what you'll actually drink every day. Cost per cup aside, the tea that keeps getting brewed beats the one that only gets admired.

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