Longjing (Dragon Well) Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Longjing, in summary:** Longjing is China's benchmark pan fired, flat leaf green, nutty and sweet at its best, but real West Lake is limited and the name is borrowed widely.

Longjing (Dragon Well) is probably China's most famous green tea; here is the short version. This anchors the named tea cluster beside sencha.

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

What it is

A pan-fired green tea traditionally associated with the West Lake area of Hangzhou, with characteristic flat, smooth, sword-shaped leaves. True tea (*Camellia sinensis*), not a herbal; see green tea explained.

Why it tastes the way it does

Pan-firing (rather than steaming) is the defining processing step, giving Longjing its signature chestnut-nutty, sweet, mellow profile. The same method explains why it tastes very different from steamed Japanese greens like sencha, which are marine and vegetal. Processing, not the plant itself, decides the character.

The grade and origin reality

Authentic West Lake (Xi Hu) Longjing is limited and priced accordingly; a very large volume of "Longjing" is grown elsewhere or at lower grade and sold under the same famous name. The name tells you the intended style; the cup tells you whether it was achieved. A good Longjing is smooth, sweetly chestnut-nutty and low in bitterness; a poor or mis-brewed one is grassy, thin, or scorched.

How to brew it

Cooler water, around 75-80°C, and a short steep. This is not optional: boiling water scorches even real West Lake leaf into bitterness, and that is the single most common reason an expensive Longjing disappoints. Let the kettle cool briefly, watch the first steep, re-steep two or three times. Drink without milk or sugar; the chestnut sweetness is the whole point.

What to expect

At its best: smooth, sweet, chestnut and fresh-grass notes, low bitterness. The benchmark Chinese green for many drinkers. At its worst (boiled or poor grade): grassy, thin, bitter. The brewing temperature matters as much as the leaf quality.

Longjing (Dragon Well) at a glance

Aspect	Answer
What it is	Pan-fired flat-leaf Chinese green, West Lake heritage
Why it tastes so	Pan-firing gives chestnut-nutty, sweet, mellow profile
Grade reality	Real West Lake is scarce; the name is borrowed widely
Brewing	Cooler water 75-80°C, short steep, never boiling
At its best	Smooth, sweet, chestnut and fresh grass, low bitterness
Caveat	Judge the leaf and cup, not just "Longjing" on the packet

Common questions

What makes Longjing different from other green teas? Pan-firing rather than steaming gives it a chestnut-nutty, sweet character. Japanese greens like sencha are steamed, which produces a marine-vegetal flavour; pan-firing produces a nuttier, mellower cup.

Is real West Lake Longjing worth the premium? Yes, if you brew it correctly and buy from a credible source. But at very low price points, "Longjing" on the packet is almost certainly not authentic West Lake; the name is widely borrowed.

Why does my Longjing taste bitter? Almost certainly the water temperature. At full boil, even good Longjing tastes bitter and thin. Brew at 75-80°C; the bitterness should largely disappear.

Does Longjing have health benefits? It is a green tea, so it carries the same general evidence base as other green teas. No claims specific to the style; drink it for the flavour.

Quick take

Longjing is the benchmark Chinese green: pan-fired, flat-leaved, chestnut-nutty and sweet at its best. The two things that matter most are finding a credible source (the name is widely borrowed) and brewing cool enough (75-80°C; boiling water ruins even good leaf). Get both right and it consistently delivers the smooth, low-bitterness cup it is famous for. Explore the green tea range or the full tea shop.

Reference noted

- PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health

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