

Darjeeling Tea

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Darjeeling, in summary: Darjeeling is a small, GI-protected Himalayan black tea, flush-dependent and muscatel-famed; genuinely distinctive, but heavily oversold with the protected name widely stretched.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Darjeeling Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/darjeeling-tea-explained/>*

Darjeeling is one of the most famous names in tea, one of the most genuinely distinctive, and one of the most heavily oversold. All three things are true at once. This sits in the named tea cluster beside [Assam](#).

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

What it is

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What it is , Darjeeling Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/darjeeling-tea-explained/>*

Tea grown in the Darjeeling district of the Indian Himalayas, West Bengal, at high elevation on steep mountain gardens. A protected geographical indication (GI): only tea from that defined area may legally carry the name, in the same way only sparkling wine from Champagne may. The growing area is small and total volume modest. See [black tea](#).

Why the flush matters

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why the flush matters , Darjeeling Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/darjeeling-tea-explained/>*

Darjeeling is not one flavour; it changes dramatically across the growing year. First flush (spring) is light, brisk, green-edged and floral; drink without milk, brew carefully. Second flush (early summer) is rounder, amber, with the famous "muscatel" grape-like, slightly winey note that built the reputation; the more forgiving everyday expression. Monsoon flush is stronger and plainer, mostly blending grade. Autumnal flush is mellow, coppery and gently fruited. Knowing the flush tells you more than almost anything else on the label.

The oversold problem

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The oversold problem , Darjeeling Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/darjeeling-tea-explained/>*

Far more tea is sold labelled "Darjeeling" worldwide than the district actually produces. The GI is in practice frequently stretched, blended out or misused. The defence is straightforward: look for the Darjeeling GI logo, prefer single-estate teas that name the garden and flush, and be realistic about price. Genuine first-flush single-garden Darjeeling is a low-volume luxury; a suspiciously cheap one labelled only "Darjeeling" is telling you something.

How to brew it

Water just off a full boil, not aggressively boiling; moderate steep of about 3 minutes, tasting as you go. First flush in particular is delicate and turns thin and harsh if over-extracted. Best without milk especially first flush, because milk simply buries the floral muscatel character you paid for. Treat it more like a fine green or white than a robust everyday black.

Darjeeling by flush

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Flush	Season	Character	Best served
First flush	Spring	Light, brisk, floral, green-edged, delicate	Without milk; careful brew
Second flush	Early summer	Amber, rounded, the famous muscatel note	Without milk usually
Monsoon flush	Monsoon rains	Stronger, plainer	Blending grade
Autumnal	Autumn	Mellow, coppery, gently fruited	Versatile

Common questions

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Common questions , Darjeeling Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/darjeeling-tea-explained/>*

What is muscatel? The distinctive grape-like, slightly winery aromatic character associated especially with second flush Darjeeling; the note that built the reputation.

Should I add milk? Usually not, especially first flush. Milk buries the floral muscatel character you are paying for. Try it plain at least once.

How do I avoid fake Darjeeling? Look for the Darjeeling GI logo, a named single estate and the flush stated on the pack. Be sceptical of cheap tea labelled only "Darjeeling" with no garden or season.

First flush or second flush? First flush is more delicate, brisk and floral; second flush is rounder with the classic muscatel note and more forgiving to brew. Neither is better; they are different teas from the same gardens at different times of year.

Quick take

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Quick take , Darjeeling Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/darjeeling-tea-explained/>*

Darjeeling earns its reputation and is genuinely distinctive; it is also genuinely oversold. The practical rule is simple: name the garden, name the flush, check the price against what a small Himalayan estate actually produces. A genuine second-flush single-garden Darjeeling, brewed carefully without milk, earns everything that has been written about it. Explore the [loose-leaf range](#) or the full [tea shop](#).

Reference noted

- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

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