Flowering Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Flowering tea, in summary:** Flowering tea is a hand tied bundle of tea and dried flowers that blooms in the pot. What it is, whether it tastes as good as it looks, and how to brew it.

Flowering tea, also called blooming tea or display tea, is the one that opens into a flower in the pot. It is lovely to watch and makes a real talking point, but it is also a category where the show sometimes matters more than the cup. This page explains what it is, how it is made, whether it is any good to drink, and how to get the best from it.

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

What it is

A flowering tea is a hand tied bundle of tea leaves, usually with one or more dried flowers (such as jasmine, marigold, globe amaranth or lily) bound inside. The bundle is shaped and dried so that, when steeped in hot water in a clear glass vessel, the leaves unfurl and the bundle "blooms" to reveal the flower inside. It is real tea, almost always a green or white base, assembled by hand into a display form.

How it is made

Each bundle is tied by hand: tea leaves are arranged around one or more flowers, bound with fine thread and then carefully shaped and dried so it holds together until brewed. It is skilled, labour intensive work, which is part of why flowering teas cost more than the equivalent loose tea, and part of why quality varies so much depending on the base leaf used.

The catch: show versus cup

The visual effect is the main point of flowering tea, and it is worth being clear about that. The base tea is frequently a modest green or white chosen for how well it ties and unfurls rather than for how it tastes, so the cup is often pleasant and light rather than remarkable. There are good quality flowering teas, but you are primarily paying for the craft and the display, not for a connoisseur’s leaf, and a sensible buyer goes in expecting a beautiful, gentle cup rather than a complex one.

How to get the best cup

Use a clear glass teapot or a tall heatproof glass so you can actually see the bloom, which is the whole point. Because the base is usually green or white, use water off the boil (around 80C) rather than fully

boiling, which scalds the leaf and makes the cup harsh; the display still works at that temperature. One bundle will usually give several infusions, so it is better value and better tasting to re steep it a few times, as the re steeping page describes, than to brew it once and discard it.

Element	Guidance
Vessel	Clear glass, wide enough to bloom
Water	About 80C, not boiling
Steep	Until bloomed and to taste, then re steep
Expectation	Beautiful and gentle, not complex

When it is a good choice

Flowering tea is at its best as a gift, a centrepiece for guests or a gentle, pretty everyday cup for someone who likes a light green or white tea. It is not the category to choose if you want depth, strength or a serious single origin experience; for that, a good loose leaf white or green is the better spend. Bought for what it is, a flowering tea is a charming thing.

What is usually inside

Most flowering teas use a green or white tea base because those leaves are supple enough to tie and dramatic enough to unfurl, with a flower such as jasmine, marigold, globe amaranth, chrysanthemum or lily bound at the centre. The flower is chosen as much for how it looks emerging as for taste, which is part of why the cup is gentle: the design brief is visual first. A few use a better base and taste good, but the category is led by the display, and a clear eyed buyer treats a lovely cup as a bonus rather than the main event.

Why it is a gift more than a daily tea

Flowering tea earns its place as an occasion: a dinner party centrepiece in a glass pot, a present for someone who likes pretty, gentle things, a novelty that pleases people who do not think much about tea. It is less suited to being your everyday cup, both because the leaf is rarely a connoisseur grade and because the pleasure of watching it bloom is wasted if it is a rushed weekday mug. Bought and used for what it is, it is charming; bought expecting a serious single origin experience, it disappoints, and that is a buyer expectation issue rather than a fault in the tea.

Getting both the show and a decent cup

A few practical points make a real difference. A wide clear glass vessel lets the bloom open fully and is the entire point, so a tall glass or glass teapot beats a mug. Pour the hot water down the side rather than directly onto the bundle so it opens gracefully. Use water off the boil for the green or white base, around 80C, which still blooms well while keeping the cup from turning bitter, and re steep the bloomed bundle a few times, as the re steeping page describes, for better value and a softer second cup.

Storing and choosing them

Flowering bundles are dried and should be kept airtight, dry and away from strong smells and light, like any tea, and used within several months while the base leaf is still fresh; an old bundle blooms but tastes flat. When choosing, a maker who states the base tea and the flowers used is more trustworthy than one selling purely on the spectacle, because it suggests the cup was considered as well as the show.

How to present it

Flowering tea is one of the few teas where presentation is part of the product, so it pays to do it properly: a clear glass pot or a tall heatproof glass, the water poured gently down the side, and the bloom allowed to open fully before pouring. Served to guests at the table it is a real small spectacle, and that, rather than complexity in the cup, is what it is for. Treating it as theatre with a pleasant drink attached, rather than as a connoisseur tea, is the way to enjoy it without disappointment.

Avoiding the common let downs

Two disappointments recur. The first is a bitter cup, almost always caused by boiling water on the delicate green or white base; water off the boil fixes it while still blooming the bundle. The second is a dull, flat cup from an old or low grade bundle, which is why buying from a seller who states the base tea and using bundles while fresh matters. Manage those two and flowering tea reliably delivers what it actually promises: a beautiful, gentle, sociable cup.

Gifting flowering tea

Flowering tea is one of the most reliable tea gifts precisely because its appeal needs no explanation: anyone can enjoy watching it bloom, regardless of how much they know about tea. A set with a small clear glass pot makes a complete present. The one kindness to the recipient is to pass on the single piece of advice that makes it work, water off the boil, in clear glass, and re steeped, so their first experience is the graceful bloom and a pleasant cup rather than a scalded, bitter one.

Realistic expectations, restated

The fairest way to read flowering tea is that it is craft and spectacle first and a beverage second, and that is entirely fine when you buy it for that. Expect a gentle, light, pleasant cup from a green or white base, enjoy the considerable visual pleasure, and look elsewhere, to a good loose leaf white or green, when you want depth and complexity. Bought with that understanding it consistently delights; bought as a serious tea it consistently underwhelms, and the difference is entirely in the expectation.

Common questions

Is flowering tea real tea? Yes, usually a green or white tea base tied by hand with dried flowers, not a herbal infusion.

Does it taste as good as it looks? Usually pleasant and light rather than outstanding; you are paying largely for the display and craft.

Can I re use the bloom? Yes, one bundle generally gives several infusions; re steeping is better value and flavour.

Why did mine taste bitter? Almost always water that was too hot; use it off the boil for the green or white base.

If you like the idea as a gift or a gentle cup, it is worth browsing the flowering and green teas we stock and brewing in clear glass off the boil so you get both the display and a pleasant cup.

Reference noted

- PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health

Adjacent teas that pair with this article: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Browse the wider tea range; above £35 UK shipping is free, and single bags are available.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Compare flowering tea by the cost of the cup, not the show. Loose leaf usually wins here; bags sometimes keep pace.

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