# Chinese Green Tea: The Pan Fired Family

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Chinese green tea, in summary:** Chinese green tea is pan-fired, not steamed, which makes it nutty, toasty and chestnutty. Longjing, gunpowder, Bi Luo Chun and jasmine bases are one firing idea at different intensities. Brew below boiling and re-steep.

"Chinese green tea" is spoken of as one thing and is really a vast family with centuries of regional styles, so the useful move is to hand you the map rather than a single description. The fact that ties the family together, and separates it from Japanese green tea, is processing: almost all Chinese green tea is pan-fired (or otherwise dry-heated) to halt oxidation, where Japanese green tea is steamed. That single difference is why Chinese greens taste gentle, nutty, toasty, chestnutty and sweetly mellow, while Japanese greens taste fresh, marine and vegetal, the same axis the Japanese green guide takes from the other side. Everything else is regional variation on that pan-fired theme.

*Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in February 2026.*

## The core members of the family

Longjing (Dragon Well) is the most famous: flat-pressed, pan-fired, nutty and sweet, the benchmark Chinese green. Bi Luo Chun is a delicate, downy, spiral-rolled tea with a fruity, floral character. Huangshan Mao Feng is a gentle, sweet, orchid-like mountain tea. Anji Bai Cha, despite "bai" (white) in its name, is a green tea from a pale cultivar unusually high in amino acids, giving exceptional sweetness. Taiping Houkui is the dramatic one, with enormous flat-pressed leaves and an orchid aroma. Liu An Gua Pian is unusual as a leaf-only tea (no bud, no stem). Gunpowder is rolled into tight pellets for robustness and is the traditional base for Maghrebi mint tea. Jasmine green tea and jasmine pearls are the scented members of the family.

## Why it tastes nutty, not marine

The clear, non-hierarchical truth is that pan-firing versus steaming is the master variable, not national superiority. Dry-heating in a wok (or basket, or drum) introduces gentle Maillard-style toasty, nutty, chestnut and sometimes buttery notes and a softer body; steaming locks in bright, grassy, marine, umami notes. Chinese green is therefore generally more forgiving, mellow and approachable for newcomers, while Japanese green is more vivid and demanding. Neither is better; they are different deliberate aesthetics, and knowing your tea is pan-fired tells you it will be gentler and more heat-tolerant than a Japanese sencha.

## How to brew it

The single biggest correction is the same as for all green tea: do not use boiling water. Most Chinese greens are happiest around 75 to 85C with short steeps; they are somewhat more forgiving than delicate Japanese greens, but boiling water still scalds them bitter and flattens the sweetness, and a careless hot brew is the commonest reason a Longjing or gunpowder disappoints, not the leaf. Many can be brewed "grandpa style" (leaves loose in a glass, topped up) precisely because pan firing makes them hardy, which is part of their everyday charm. Good Chinese green re-steeps several times, each infusion slightly different.

### Is Chinese green tea good for you

It is true green tea, so the story is the standard one: caffeine, polyphenols (catechins), some L-theanine, hydration, a modest real picture and no miracle. The idea that Chinese green tea melts fat and fixes everything is the usual extrapolation from concentrated studies and goes far beyond what a daily cup supports. The real reward is one of the deepest, most varied and most rewarding flavour families in all of tea, with centuries of regional craft behind it, and that is reason enough without the mythology.

### Chinese green tea at a glance

| Tea | The read |
|---|---|
| Longjing (Dragonwell) | The benchmark: flat leaf, chestnut sweetness, low astringency |
| Gunpowder | Rolled pellets; bold, brisk, the Moroccan-mint base |
| Bi Luo Chun | Delicate, fruity-floral, tippy; brew gently |
| Jasmine green | Scented Chinese green; the benchmark floral |
| Mao Feng and others | Many regional styles; pan-fired character throughout |

One footnote for buyers: the single best entry point is a good Longjing (Dragon Well) brewed cool and short, because it is the benchmark the whole tradition is measured against, and its chestnut-sweet, low-astringency cup is exactly what pan-firing is meant to produce. Learn it well and every other Chinese green reads easily: gunpowder for a sturdy everyday and Moroccan mint base, Bi Luo Chun for delicacy, jasmine for scenting. Buy a good one from the Longjing range, compare a gunpowder, browse the wider green tea range, or the full tea shop.

### Reference noted


- PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health
- PubMed: Polyphenols and chronic disease prevention


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