Jasmine Pearls: Shape, Scenting and the Cooled Cup Test

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Jasmine pearls, in summary:** Jasmine pearls are hand-rolled, jasmine-scented green tea, beautiful but the pretty unfurl proves nothing. Only the cooled cup separates real flower-scenting from cheap spray.

Jasmine pearls (sometimes "dragon pearls" or "jasmine dragon pearls") are the most photogenic form of jasmine tea, tight hand-rolled balls that unfurl as they brew, and they sit at the exact junction of two earlier clarities on this wiki: the Chinese green tea family and the scented-versus-flavoured tea question. The job here is to explain what the pearl form adds, and to repeat the one test that separates real jasmine scenting from cheap spray, because the beautiful shape can distract buyers from that question.

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

What jasmine pearls actually are

They are high-grade green tea (sometimes with white tea buds), made from tender early shoots, scented with real jasmine blossom and hand-rolled into small pearls. Traditional jasmine scenting is a slow physical process: tea is layered with fresh jasmine flowers over several nights so the leaf absorbs the fragrance, and the spent flowers are removed, so the aroma lives in the leaf, not in visible petals. The pearls are then formed by hand, which is labour-intensive and part of the price. In the cup, good jasmine pearls are delicate, sweet and clearly floral but with the green tea still present underneath, and they should not turn soapy as they cool.

Why the pearl shape matters

The shape is partly functional and partly presentation, both true at once. Functionally, rolling tender leaf into a tight pearl protects it, helps preserve the scent, and gives the pleasing slow unfurl that releases flavour gradually over several infusions. As presentation, the pearls are undeniably beautiful and are used to justify premium pricing. The shape does not by itself guarantee quality, since a mediocre sprayed tea can also be rolled into pearls, so the form is a real craft feature and a marketing asset at once, and the buyer should never let the prettiness substitute for the scenting question.

Real scenting versus spray

This is the test that matters, the same one from the scented-versus-flavoured tea page. Properly scented jasmine pearls taste of tea and jasmine integrated together and stay pleasant as they cool. Cheaply flavoured ones, sprayed with jasmine flavouring rather than layered with blossom, smell intensely perfumed when dry, sit on top of the tea, can taste artificial, and often worsen as the cup cools. Price is a loose guide; the cooled cup is the real one. The pearl shape is irrelevant to this test, which is exactly why it is worth stating: do not let the beautiful unfurl reassure you about scenting it does not prove.

A good first jasmine

If someone wants one tea to learn what authentic jasmine actually is, pearls are a sound recommendation, for practical rather than aesthetic reasons. The hand rolling concentrates good leaf and protects the scent, so a well made pearl tends to hold its quality on the shelf better than loose scented leaf; the slow unfurl spreads the flavour across three or more infusions, so a single measure teaches how the cup evolves; and the visible opening in a glass makes the difference from a sprayed bag register and stick. None of that is a quality guarantee on its own, the cooled-cup test still rules, but as a teaching tea the pearl form earns its place.

How to brew them well

Treat them as the delicate green tea they are: water around 75 to 80C, not boiling, and a short first steep, watching the pearls open. Boiling water scalds the green base bitter and turns the jasmine harsh, the single most common reason people find expensive jasmine pearls disappointing. They are made to be re-steeped, often three or more times, unfurling further and giving slightly different infusions. A glass vessel makes the unfurl visible and is part of the pleasure.

Are jasmine pearls good for you

They are true green tea with a floral scent, so the story is just the green tea story: caffeine, catechins, some L-theanine, hydration, no miracle. The jasmine adds aroma and a pleasant habit, not a clinical effect, and any claim about the body is the usual marketing. The real reward is in the cup: a beautiful, fragrant, gently sweet brew and the small theatre of the unfurling pearl, which is reason enough on its own.

Judging jasmine pearls at a glance

Signal	What it tells you
Tastes integrated, stays pleasant cooled	Properly scented, good
Perfumed dry, sits on top, worsens cooled	Sprayed flavouring, avoid
Pearl shape alone	Proves nothing; craft and marketing both
Slow unfurl over infusions	Functional benefit; re-steeps three or more times
Body claims of any kind	Just the modest green tea story

The one rule to carry away is the cooled-cup test, not the prettiness: real scenting tastes integrated and stays pleasant as it cools, while spray sits on top and turns soapy. The companion jasmine tea guide and the wider green tea family develop the same standard, and you can explore pearls across the jasmine range , the green tea range, or the full tea shop.

Related on the wiki: Flowering tea, explained.

Where this fits in the wider range: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Shop the tea range at teas.co.uk, where UK delivery turns free past £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Good jasmine is scented with real flowers, not oil. Let the cup cool a moment and the aroma opens right up.

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