White Peony (Bai Mu Dan): The Value Sweet Spot

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **White Peony, in summary:** White Peony (Bai Mu Dan) is the value sweet spot of white tea: bud plus the first one or two leaves, giving most of Silver Needle's delicacy with more flavour and body, at roughly half the price (around £15 to £30 per 100g).

White Peony, Bai Mu Dan, is the white tea most people should probably be drinking, and the single most useful fact is that it is the sweet spot of the white tea family: made from buds plus the first one or two young leaves, it gives most of Silver Needle's delicacy with much more flavour and body, at a fraction of the price. Naming that value clearly is more useful than the usual marketing, which fixates on rarer, dearer Silver Needle and leaves drinkers thinking fine white tea is unaffordable.

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

What White Peony actually is

It is a Fujian white tea made by plucking the bud together with its first one or two adjoining young leaves (the traditional "yi ya er ye", one bud and two leaves, standard), then withering and drying it with the same minimal handling as all white tea. The presence of leaf as well as bud is the whole point: it gives a fuller, rounder cup than the pure-bud Silver Needle, with more colour (a pale gold rather than the palest straw), a gentle sweetness, and notes often described as hay, melon, light florals and a soft, slightly nutty depth. The name "white peony" describes how the downy white-tipped buds among the green-grey leaves look bunched together, and those buds are the visual signature.

Why it is the value choice

This is the core candour. Silver Needle is buds only, scarcer and far more expensive, and superb, but it is also subtle to the point that beginners often miss what they paid for. White Peony delivers a clearly recognisable, satisfying white-tea character, sweet, soft, fragrant, for much less money, and is more forgiving to brew. For most people, most of the time, White Peony is the smarter buy, and we'd rather say so than push the prestige tea. It is also a better everyday tea precisely because it has enough body to be enjoyable without ceremony, and it cold-brews well over a few hours in the fridge.

How it sits between the grades

Placing it on the family map helps: Silver Needle (buds only) is the most delicate and dear, around £30 to £60 per 100g; White Peony (bud plus young leaf) is the balanced middle at roughly £15 to £30; Shou Mei and Gong Mei (later, leafier pickings) are sturdy and cheap, about £8 to £20. White Peony quality itself varies with how bud-rich and early it is: a top White Peony approaches Silver Needle in finesse, a low one shades toward Shou Mei's leafier briskness, so within the grade the same "buy on the described picking and the cup, not the name" rule applies.

How to brew it well

Treat it as the gentle bud-and-leaf tea it is. A generous amount of leaf, water around 80 to 90C, and a patient steep; it gives its sweetness slowly and is hard to make harshly bitter, so err toward more leaf and time rather than hotter water. It re-steeps beautifully, often four or more infusions, the second frequently the sweetest. Boiling water is survivable but coarsens the delicacy, so the default is cooler and patient, and no milk or sugar, which would bury the soft character entirely.

Is White Peony good for you

It is true white tea, so the story is the standard one: caffeine (more than people expect, as buds are caffeine-rich), polyphenols, hydration, no miracle. It carries the same "super tea", "anti ageing" and "beauty" marketing as all white tea, and the position is the same: a good source of tea polyphenols, not a demonstrated wonder. The real reward is that White Peony is the most sensible, satisfying way into fine white tea: lovely, affordable and forgiving, which is reason enough.

White Peony at a glance

Aspect	Answer
What it is	Chinese white tea; buds plus the first 1 to 2 leaves; the classic mid-tier grade
Chinese name	Bai Mu Dan, literally "white peony", for the leaf appearance
Origin	Fujian (Fuding and Zhenghe are the historic centres)
Grade position	Between Silver Needle (premium) and Shou Mei (everyday)
Flavour	Floral, hay-like, gently sweet finish; fuller than Silver Needle
Cost	Around £15 to £30 per 100g; the value pick
Brewing	80 to 90C, patient steeps, several infusions; gentle handling

The one idea to carry away is that White Peony is the value sweet spot of white tea, most of the finesse of Silver Needle with more body, for far less, and forgiving enough to drink every day. The companion Silver Needle, Shou Mei and aged white tea guides cover the neighbours, and you can explore it across the white tea range or the full tea shop.

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