Jin Jun Mei: Why It Is So Costly and So Faked

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Jin Jun Mei, in summary:** Jin Jun Mei is a recent Wuyi bud only black tea, smooth and honeyed, a prized but scarce and heavily faked cup. A cheap one is almost certainly not the real thing, so let price be your first filter and the cup your second.

Jin Jun Mei is one of the most expensive and most faked black teas in the world, and the single most useful fact is that it is a modern luxury invention, created in the Wuyi area of Fujian only in the mid-2000s, made entirely from enormous numbers of tiny tea buds. Knowing it is recent, bud only and scarce explains both why authentic Jin Jun Mei costs so much and why most of what is sold under the name cannot possibly be real.

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

What Jin Jun Mei actually is

It is a black tea from the Wuyi mountains of Fujian (the same area as Lapsang Souchong and rock oolong), made exclusively from very young single buds, hand-picked in vast quantity, then carefully oxidised and processed without the pinewood smoking of classic Lapsang. The cup is smooth, sweet, complex and gentle, with honey, fruit, cocoa and floral notes and almost no harsh astringency. It is essentially an ultra-premium, unsmoked, bud-only descendant of the Wuyi black tea tradition, designed as a luxury tea from the outset.

Why it is so expensive, and so faked

This is the central clarity. It takes a very large number of hand picked buds to make a small amount of Jin Jun Mei, and authentic production from the core Wuyi area is limited and labour intensive, so authentic Jin Jun Mei is legitimately costly. The direct consequence is that the market is flooded with imitations: ordinary bud black teas, teas from outside the region, and lower-grade leaf are routinely sold as "Jin Jun Mei" at a fraction of the real price. This is not a fringe caveat but the normal state of the market, and the implication is blunt: a cheap Jin Jun Mei is almost certainly not the real thing.

How to buy it

The defence is the cluster-wide one, intensified by price. Authentic Jin Jun Mei is expensive, scarce and sold by specialists who can speak specifically about Wuyi origin and the bud only standard; it tastes remarkably

smooth, sweet and complex with no smoke and no rough edge. A widely available, inexpensive Jin Jun Mei should be assumed to be an imitation, which can still be a pleasant bud black tea, just not the costly original and not worth the original's price. Buy it only from sellers whose candour you trust, treat a low price as the answer rather than a deal, and treat it as a rare splurge for the experience, the same judge-the-source habit the how to judge tea quality guide trains.

How to brew it well

Treat it as a delicate, fine bud black tea, not a sturdy breakfast black. Water hot but not a hard rolling boil (around 85 to 95C) and short, careful steeps protect the honeyed sweetness; aggressive heat and long stewing waste the very finesse you paid for. It is best without milk, and good Jin Jun Mei re-steeps several times in a small pot, gongfu style, giving a series of sweet, evolving infusions rather than one big mug.

Is Jin Jun Mei good for you

Being ordinary black tea underneath, it comes with the usual facts: caffeine, polyphenols and no miracle. Its prestige attracts grand claims; the fair position is that it is a smooth, scarce, expensive tea, not a demonstrated treatment, and being bud only changes flavour, not pharmacology. The reward is a modern classic in the cup, if, and it is a real if, you can be confident it is authentic.

Real versus faked at a glance

Signal	What it means
Expensive, scarce, specialist seller	Fits the real thing
Cheap and widely available	Almost certainly an imitation
Smooth, sweet, complex, no smoke, no edge	Fits the real thing
Rough, flat, astringent	Ordinary bud black sold as Jin Jun Mei
Claims for the body	Just the modest black tea story

The single most useful habit is to let price be your first filter and the cooled cup your second: a bargain Jin Jun Mei is, almost by definition, not the scarce bud only Wuyi original, while an authentic one from a candid specialist deserves a gentle, re steeped brew so the honeyed sweetness is not wasted. The companion black tea guide and the Chinese tea overview place it in context, and you can explore premium leaf in the full tea shop.

Adjacent teas that pair with this article: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Shop the tea range at teas.co.uk, with no UK delivery charge past £35.

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teas · The real Jin Jun Mei is costly for good reasons, and those same reasons get it faked. Buy from someone who can name the source.

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