Golden Monkey Tea: The Name Is Folklore, Not a Grade

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Golden Monkey, in summary:** Golden Monkey is a tippy, golden-bud Chinese black tea, honeyed and smooth. The charming name is descriptive folklore, not a grade, so judge it by origin, manufacture and the cup.

Golden Monkey is one of the more charmingly named Chinese black teas, and the single most useful fact is that the name is descriptive folklore, not a grade or a guarantee: it refers to a tippy, golden-budded black tea whose curved, downy buds were fancifully likened to little golden monkey paws. Knowing the name describes appearance and a style, not a certified quality level, is the first step to buying it sensibly.

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

What Golden Monkey actually is

It is a Chinese black tea, traditionally associated with Fujian and Yunnan, made with a high proportion of golden tips and young leaves, fully oxidised. The cup is smooth, sweet and gentle, with honey, cocoa, malt and sometimes a soft peppery or fruity note, and very little of the brisk astringency of Indian breakfast blacks. It is prized as an approachable, naturally sweet black tea that needs no milk, in the same broad family of tippy Chinese blacks as Dian Hong.

What the name really means

"Golden Monkey" (Jin Hou) is essentially a poetic trade name for a tippy, golden-bud black tea style, applied by different producers to teas of varying origin and quality. The golden tips are a real signal of bud rich plucking, which correlates with the smooth sweetness the tea is bought for, but the name itself is not a regulated grade, so two "Golden Monkey" teas can differ considerably. As everywhere in this family, the tippy name is a style hint and the cup is the proof.

How it relates to Dian Hong

Golden Monkey overlaps heavily with the Dian Hong and tippy Chinese black family in character, smooth, sweet, honeyed, low in astringency, bud-rich, and the names are sometimes used loosely or interchangeably in Western markets. Decoded, it is a tippy, orthodox, golden-bud Chinese black, typically from Fujian or Yunnan, and that description, not the monkey, tells you it will be honeyed and best without milk. Its close

kinship with Yunnan black is the clearest illustration: the same broad idea, a different garden and emphasis, predictable once you read the leaf rather than the legend.

How to brew it well

Treat it as a fine, smooth, tippy black tea. Water hot but not a hard rolling boil (around 90 to 95C) and a moderate steep bring out the honey and malt; over-hot, over-long brewing coarsens the delicate golden-bud sweetness. It is best without milk so its natural sweetness shows, and good Golden Monkey re-steeps several times in a small pot, giving evolving sweet infusions in the gongfu manner rather than one strong mug. The commonest disappointment is buying it expecting a hearty breakfast mug, brewing it like one with boiling water and a long stew, and concluding it is thin; a thirty second adjustment, cooler water, shorter steep, no milk, brings out the tea most people enjoy immediately.

Is Golden Monkey good for you

As a real black tea, it carries the usual story: caffeine, polyphenols, no miracle. The golden tips and gentle sweetness are flavour and plucking facts, not claims about the body, and any such framing is the usual marketing. The real reward is an approachable, naturally sweet, charmingly named black tea, best understood as part of the tippy Chinese black family and bought on the cup rather than the name.

Golden Monkey at a glance

Aspect	The read
What it is	A tippy Chinese (Fujian or Yunnan) black tea
The name	Descriptive folklore, not a grade or guarantee
Against Dian Hong	Close relative; both golden-bud Chinese blacks
Taste	Honeyed, smooth, low astringency; drink milkless
Brew	Just off the boil, short, re-steepable

The whole lesson is that the monkey is folklore and the cup is chemistry: decode the name into origin and method, brew it gently and milkless, and Golden Monkey is a thoroughly approachable Chinese black rather than a mystery, the eyes open standard the wider black tea guide applies. The CTC versus orthodox guide covers the manufacture axis, and you can buy a good one in the full tea shop.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Try a plain, cheaper Chinese black before paying for Golden Monkey. Pay the premium only once you know you like the tippy style.

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