Tea on a Budget: Where to Spend, Where to Save

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea on a budget, in summary:** Good everyday tea is genuinely cheap; the worst value is at the extremes, the bargain dust and the over-hyped luxury, not the sensible middle. Judge by cost per cup, spend where it counts, re-steep good leaf, and keep the free technique sharp.

Tea is often presented as a hobby that gets expensive fast, and the truth is the opposite: good everyday tea is genuinely cheap, and the worst value in tea is usually at the extremes, the bargain dust and the over-hyped luxury, not in the sensible middle. Buying well on a budget is mostly about knowing where money does and does not matter.

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

Why per cup beats per pack

People judge tea cost by the price on the pack, which is misleading. What matters is cost per cup, and two factors transform it. First, leaf quantity: a pack lasts for many cups, so even a "pricey" loose tea is often pennies per cup. Second, re-steeping: good whole-leaf tea gives several infusions from one measure, sometimes halving the real per-cup cost. Calculated per cup, decent loose tea frequently costs the same as or less than premium teabags, which is the opposite of the usual assumption and the single most freeing budget fact.

Where money genuinely matters

Money makes a real difference at the step from the cheapest dust-grade tea to a competent everyday whole leaf or good bag tea: that jump genuinely improves the cup and is small in absolute terms. It also matters for water-temperature control if your only barrier is scalding everything (a basic variable kettle is the one piece of kit that reliably earns its cost). A decent teapot or infuser and an airtight tin are one-off costs that improve every cup for years and stop tea going stale. And it matters modestly for freshness: buying smaller amounts more often beats a cheap giant tin gone stale.

Where money genuinely does not matter

Beyond "competent", spending more buys distinctiveness and refinement, not basic goodness: a mid-price tea brewed well beats an expensive one brewed badly every time. Prestige names, "legendary" clay pots,

ceremony-grade accessories and rare vintage romance are largely about status, art or scarcity, not a better everyday cup. A basic stainless-steel basket infuser does the same job as a designer one, and a plain mug holds tea as well as a ceremonial cup. The most expensive teas are often the most fragile and easiest for a beginner to waste, so deliberately skipping the luxury tier costs you almost nothing in everyday enjoyment.

The budget strategy

Buy small quantities of a few forgiving, good whole-leaf teas rather than one expensive haul or one giant cheap tin. Re-steep everything that will re-steep. Master the free technique (temperature, leaf quantity, time) before buying anything, because it improves cheap tea more than money does. Keep good teabags for convenience without guilt. A simple way to split the spend: roughly 70 percent on everyday tea (mid-tier loose leaf in big pouches, or decent own-brand bags), 25 percent on one or two quality loose leafs you genuinely love, and 5 percent on occasional exploration of something new. Two extra savers that cost nothing: brew slightly weaker (around 2g per cup rather than 2.5 to 3g) if it still satisfies you, and buy seasonal teas once the flush-release hype premium has faded. Done this way, genuinely good tea is one of the cheapest pleasures there is.

Tea on a budget, at a glance

Question	Answer
What's the cheapest decent tea?	Supermarket own-brand basic black teabags at around 1-2p per cup. Drinkable, dependable.
What's a good budget loose leaf?	Mid-tier loose leaf English Breakfast or Assam at £6-10 for 250g works out to about 3-5p per cup with normal serving.
How does price per cup actually compare?	Premium pyramid bag: 12-25p/cup. Mid-tier loose leaf: 3-8p/cup. Cheap teabag: 1-3p/cup. Premium loose leaf (£15/100g): 7-15p/cup. Whole-leaf Chinese tea: 10-30p/cup multi-infused.
Where should I splurge?	One genuinely good loose leaf for the cups you really enjoy. £15-20 on 100g of a premium tea you love beats £15 on six boxes of mid-grade teabags.
Where should I save?	Everyday strong tea (any Assam-blend supermarket bag), herbal infusions (own-brand chamomile/peppermint is fine), and boring brewing kit (a £5 infuser equals a £20 one functionally).
Is loose leaf cheaper than bags?	At premium quality levels, yes. At commodity levels, teabags are cheaper. Mid-range, similar.
How much tea is "normal"?	4-6 cups a day costs around 10-30p in tea, plus electricity for the kettle. £30-90/year for one person.
Tricks for stretching money?	Multi-infuse appropriate teas, refill from bulk loose leaf, drink slightly weaker, buy in season at flush release.

Reference noted

- Britannica: Tea (beverage)

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Match the tea to the moment. A 6am cup and a 4pm cup do not need to be the same brew.

More from the tea wiki

- Loose leaf vs teabag
- Moving on from teabags
- Tea grades
- Re-steeping tea
- Tea caddy
- Tea storage
- Tea tasting for beginners

Earn rewards on teas.co.uk

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/