# Does Rooibos Tea Have Caffeine?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Rooibos caffeine, in short:** Pure rooibos has zero caffeine; Aspalathus linearis is not the Camellia sinensis tea plant, so it is a botanical zero, and caffeine is no concern all day, in the evening, in pregnancy or for children. Only a blend with real tea or a caffeinated herb changes that.

The short answer is a clean one: rooibos is naturally caffeine free, because it is not tea at all. It is an infusion of a South African plant, Aspalathus linearis, which has nothing to do with the caffeine plant behind real tea, so pure rooibos is a dependable zero. The rest of this page is just the detail and the one blend caveat.

*Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in April 2026.*

## Why rooibos is genuinely caffeine free

Caffeine in "tea" comes only from Camellia sinensis. Rooibos ("red bush") is a completely different shrub, native to South Africa, with no natural caffeine. Both the common red (oxidised) rooibos and the less common green (unoxidised) rooibos are caffeine free; the colour difference is processing, not caffeine. This is one of the most reliable caffeine-free answers in the whole drinks aisle: it is not "low caffeine", it is none, which is exactly why rooibos is such a popular all-day and evening choice and a common base for caffeine-free "chai" and "Earl Grey" style blends.

## The one real caveat: blends

The only catch is blends, and it is the same as for every herbal drink. Pure rooibos and rooibos blended only with other herbs, spices or fruit remain caffeine free. But rooibos is sometimes blended with actual tea or caffeinated botanicals, a rooibos and green tea mix, or a blend with added yerba mate or guarana, and those are not caffeine free. Read the ingredients: rooibos plus herbs, spices and fruit is caffeine free; rooibos plus any true tea or caffeine herb is not. The bush itself never contributes caffeine; only what is blended with it can.

## What "caffeine free" does and does not mean here

Caffeine free really does mean no caffeine, and so none of the sleeplessness or jitters it can cause and no daily limit to count against, which is handy in the evening, for anyone sensitive to caffeine and for people advised to limit it. What it does not mean is "free of everything" or "automatically a tonic": rooibos still

contains plant polyphenols and is often marketed as a superfood, and the position, consistent across this wiki, is that it is a pleasant, low tannin, caffeine free drink and nothing more. It is also naturally low in tannin, the compound that makes some teas astringent, which is why it tastes smooth and rarely bitter even when brewed too long, a practical plus that is purely about taste.

### Does decaffeination apply

No, and the reason is simple: rooibos has no caffeine to remove, so it is never "decaffeinated". This is a meaningful distinction from decaf tea. Rooibos sits in the legume family (Fabaceae), not the tea family (Theaceae), and has never produced caffeine in its chemistry, so unlike decaffeinated black or green tea, which has caffeine stripped out after harvest and keeps a small residue (typically around 2 to 5mg per cup), rooibos is zero at the biological level, not "caffeine-reduced" by processing. A product implying "decaffeinated rooibos" is muddled labelling; a proper label says "naturally caffeine free".

### Does rooibos have caffeine, at a glance

| Question | Short answer |
|---|---|
| Pure rooibos caffeine? | Zero. None. Naturally caffeine-free. |
| Why no caffeine? | Rooibos is Aspalathus linearis, not Camellia sinensis |
| Decaf rooibos? | Not needed; the plant has no caffeine to remove |
| Caffeine-free blends? | Pure rooibos blends are zero; check label for other tea additions |
| Rooibos chai blends | Check label; some add black tea (small caffeine), most do not |
| "Red tea" caffeine? | Depends on context; Chinese "red tea" is black tea WITH caffeine |
| Safe for night? | Yes; zero caffeine, no sleep interference |
| Safe for children? | Yes; zero caffeine, gentle profile |

### Reference noted


- EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine (2015)
- NHS guidance on caffeine


**FROM THE CURATOR**

*teas* · Rooibos forgives a long, hot steep, it barely turns bitter, so it is one of the easiest caffeine-free cups to get right. Start with a plain single-ingredient one.

### More from the tea wiki


- Caffeine in tea
- Ultimate caffeine guide
- Caffeine-free tea

- Rooibos tea
- What counts as tea
- Does chamomile tea have caffeine?
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