Does Earl Grey Have Caffeine?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Earl Grey caffeine, in short:** Classic Earl Grey is caffeinated black tea scented with bergamot. A green base also has caffeine, a rooibos "Earl Grey" has none at all, and decaf is very low but not absolute zero. Read the base.

The short answer is yes: standard Earl Grey contains caffeine, because Earl Grey is not a special plant, it is black tea (real Camellia sinensis) scented with oil of bergamot. The bergamot adds aroma, not caffeine and not decaffeination; the caffeine comes from the black tea base. The useful detail is how much, and which versions are the exceptions, and this page sets both out below.

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

Why Earl Grey has caffeine

Earl Grey is a flavouring applied to a base, not a tea type of its own. The classic base is black tea, which is fully oxidised true tea and therefore caffeinated like any black tea. The bergamot citrus oil that defines Earl Grey contributes flavour and aroma only; it does not raise, lower or remove caffeine. So a normal cup of Earl Grey behaves, caffeine-wise, like a normal cup of black tea, which is the baseline before the variations.

How much caffeine is in Earl Grey?

The answer is "about the same as ordinary black tea": a middling amount, usually well short of a strong coffee, yet enough to give you a lift and to disturb sleep if you are sensitive to caffeine and drink it late. As with all tea, the precise figure is not fixed: it depends on the leaf grade and, mostly, on how you brew, more leaf, hotter water and a longer steep give more caffeine, a quick light brew less. Anyone quoting one exact milligram figure for "Earl Grey" is overstating a number that brewing alone moves considerably.

The genuine exceptions

This is where frankness earns its place, because "Earl Grey" is now a flavour profile applied to several different bases. Green Earl Grey uses a green tea base: still caffeinated (green tea has caffeine too), generally a little less robustly than the black version but not low and certainly not zero. Rooibos Earl Grey, also sold as "caffeine free Earl Grey", is made on a rooibos base: that one really contains no caffeine, since rooibos is a South African herb, not tea, and it suits anyone who loves the bergamot flavour but not the caffeine. The rule is to read what the base actually is: black or green base means caffeinated; rooibos base

means caffeine free.

The decaf option

Decaf Earl Grey is a straightforward product: it is decaffeinated black tea scented with bergamot, so most (not quite all) of its caffeine has been removed and a small amount remains, which is true of all decaf. It tastes slightly softer than full-caffeine Earl Grey, a fair trade, not a failure, and is a sensible choice for an evening Earl Grey without the caffeine, just not an absolute zero. If you need true zero, the rooibos version is the clear choice over decaf. Brew classic Earl Grey just off the boil for three to four minutes (cooler and shorter if you want a touch less caffeine).

Earl Grey by base, and the caffeine

Base	Caffeine
Black tea (classic)	Yes, ordinary black tea level, below a strong coffee
Green tea base	Yes, generally a little less, not low
Rooibos "Earl Grey"	Completely caffeine free
Decaf Earl Grey	Very low, not absolute zero

Reference noted

- NHS guidance on caffeine

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Five bags of anything drunk in a hurry will not match one pot of Earl Grey made properly from loose leaf.

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