Black Tea vs Coffee

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Black tea vs coffee, in short:** Black tea vs coffee: tea is the gentler, lower caffeine, steadier daily drink, coffee the stronger faster one, with a smaller caffeine gap than the stereotype suggests.

The headline is that black tea and coffee are the two great everyday caffeinated drinks, and black tea is generally the gentler, lower caffeine, steadier one while coffee is stronger and faster. Neither is a health drink or a villain; the real variables are caffeine sensitivity, character preference and what you add, which this page lays out clearly.

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

What they have in common

What they share: both are caffeinated, much loved daily drinks, both usually taken with or without milk, both fine unsweetened and both routinely turned into sugary versions where the sugar warning applies equally. Both sit comfortably in a normal diet; neither needs a superfood story.

The real differences

The real differences. Caffeine: a normal mug of black tea is moderate and generally below a typical mug of brewed coffee, so tea is usually the gentler routine lift, though a strong, long brewed tea narrows the gap and quoting fixed numbers is misleading for both. Feel: true tea contains L theanine, the fair basis for the steadier, less jittery feel many tea drinkers report versus coffee's sharper hit. Character: coffee is bitter, roasted, intense; black tea is brisk, malty or bright depending on origin. Both take milk; tea's tannins can modestly reduce non haem iron absorption with meals, which matters for the iron deficient.

Which should you choose

Choose black tea for a gentler, steadier, lower caffeine daily drink with milk friendly versatility; choose coffee for a stronger, faster, more intense hit. If you are caffeine sensitive or prefer a gentler buzz, tea is usually the kinder habit; if you want a bigger jolt, coffee delivers it. Many people use tea and coffee at different times, which is a sensible, clear answer.

Quick take

The clear verdict: black tea is the gentler, lower caffeine, steadier choice; coffee the stronger, faster one, with a smaller caffeine gap than the stereotype implies. Neither is medicine or poison. Decide by caffeine need and character, bear the iron timing point in mind if you are iron deficient, leave the sugar out of both, and enjoy each as the everyday pleasure it is.

Black tea and coffee side by side

	Black tea	Coffee
Caffeine	Moderate; usually below a brewed coffee	Higher, faster
Feel	Steadier, less jittery for many (L theanine)	Sharper hit
Character	Brisk, malty or bright by origin	Bitter, roasted, intense
With milk	Versatile, built for it	Common, optional
Best for	A gentler, steadier daily drink	A stronger, faster jolt

Reference noted

- NHS guidance on caffeine

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