

# How to Make Sweet Tea

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

**Sweet tea, in short:** Southern sweet tea is strong black tea sweetened hot and served very cold: brew double strength, dissolve sugar warm, chill fast.

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for How to Make Sweet Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-make-sweet-tea/>*

Sweet tea is the classic American South iced drink: strong black tea, sweetened while hot so the sugar dissolves fully, then chilled and served over ice. It is genuinely delicious and genuinely sweet, and a clear recipe gives you both, how to make a proper one, and a candid look at exactly how much sugar that traditionally means so you can decide your own level.

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

## What you need

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What you need , How to Make Sweet Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-make-sweet-tea/>*

For about a litre: 6 to 8 black teabags (or 3 to 4 tablespoons loose black tea), a litre of water, and, traditionally, anywhere from a half to a full cup of sugar, that is the usual range a classic recipe uses, plus ice and optional lemon. The tea base should be brewed strong because the ice will dilute it.

## How to make it, step by step

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for How to make it, step by step , How to Make Sweet Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-make-sweet-tea/>*

Boil the water, remove from heat, add the tea and steep 4 to 6 minutes for a strong base (a short pinch of bicarbonate of soda is a traditional trick to reduce bitterness from the long, strong steep). Remove the tea. While the tea is still hot, stir in the sugar until fully dissolved, doing this hot is the whole technique, sugar will not dissolve properly in cold tea. Top up with cold water if needed, cool, refrigerate, and serve over plenty of ice with lemon.

## How to make it genuinely good

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for How to make it genuinely good , How to Make Sweet Tea. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/how-to-make-sweet-tea/*

Genuinely good sweet tea is about a strong, smooth, not stewed base and full sugar dissolution. Use a decent robust black tea, do not over steep into harshness (the bicarb trick or a slightly shorter steep helps), and chill it properly so it is bracingly cold over lots of ice. Fresh lemon lifts it. A "simple syrup" (sugar pre dissolved in water) lets you sweeten to taste glass by glass instead of committing the whole jug.

## The honest note

The honest note is the sugar one this whole wiki insists on: traditional sweet tea is, by design, a high sugar drink, a full sugar recipe can rival a soft drink, and the iced, refreshing format makes it slip down fast. That is fine as an occasional treat made knowingly, the sensible move is simply to know the number and that it is entirely yours to set. You can make genuinely lovely sweet tea at a fraction of the classic sugar, or use a syrup so each glass is your choice; the tea and the ritual stay exactly the same, only the sugar is dialled to where you actually want it.

## Sweet tea, at a glance

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Element	Short rule
What it is	Strong black tea, sweetened while hot, served very cold
Brew strong	Double strength; ice will dilute it heavily
Sweeten warm	Sugar dissolves in hot tea, not iced; syrup works too
Chill fast	Over plenty of ice or quickly in the fridge
Clear note	It is a sweet drink by design; the sugar is a choice, own it

## Reference noted

- [EFSA: Scientific opinion on dietary reference values for water](#)

**FROM THE CURATOR** teas · Start cheap, stay cheap until something stops you. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

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- [How much sugar in tea](#)
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- [How to make bubble tea](#)
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