How to Make Sun Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Sun tea, in short:** Sun tea steeps for hours at warm bacteria-friendly temperatures, a small real risk: cold brew in the fridge gives the same smooth result safely.

Sun tea is tea brewed slowly in a jar left in the sun rather than with boiling water. This guide gives you the method plus the one food safety point that a lot of cheerful recipes skip and that you should know.

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

What you need

A large clean glass jar with a lid, cold or room temperature water, tea (black, green or herbal; teabags or loose in an infuser), and a sunny spot. Optional: lemon, mint, sweetener after brewing.

How to make it, step by step

Put the tea and water in the clean jar, lid on, and leave it in direct sun for a few hours (commonly 2 to 4), until it reaches the strength and colour you like. Remove the tea, then refrigerate promptly and serve cold over ice. Sweeten or flavour after brewing, not during.

How to make it genuinely good

Good sun tea is gently brewed and not left endlessly: a few hours is plenty, and much longer mostly risks the safety issue below rather than improving flavour. Use a scrupulously clean jar, good water and enough tea, and chill it the moment it is ready. Cold brewing in the fridge is the smoother, lower risk alternative if the sun is unreliable.

What to bear in mind

Sun tea is brewed at warm, not hot, temperatures for hours, which is exactly the range in which bacteria can multiply. The proportionate advice is to use a very clean container, do not brew for many hours or in marginal warmth, refrigerate promptly, drink within a day, and discard it if it looks ropey, thick or smells off. This is not scaremongering; it is the one real caution this otherwise lovely method carries, and cold brewing in the fridge sidesteps it entirely.

Sun tea, at a glance

Element	Short rule
What it is	Tea steeped in a jar in sunlight, a slow warm infusion
The caveat	Warm, not hot: a real, if small, bacterial growth risk
Safer route	Cold brew in the fridge gives a similar smooth result without the risk
If you do it	Clean jar, a few hours only, refrigerate promptly, drink same day
Discard	Any thick or syrupy look (ropey bacteria), bin it untasted

Reference noted

- Britannica: Tea

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teas · Begin with plain cheap bags; keep them until they fall short. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

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