How to Make a Hot Toddy

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Hot toddy, in short:** A hot toddy is hot tea or water with a spirit, honey and lemon: a comforting, warming nightcap rather than a treatment for colds, and it contains alcohol. The method.

A hot toddy is a warm drink of tea (or hot water), honey, lemon and usually a spirit, traditionally reached for when cold or run down. A clear guide gives you a good tea-based recipe plus a candid, non-medical word on what it does and does not actually do for a cold.

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

What you need

Per serving: a cup of hot black tea (or hot water), a tablespoon of honey, the juice of a wedge of lemon, and, traditionally, a measure of a spirit such as whisky. Optional: a cinnamon stick, clove, or fresh ginger.

How to make it, step by step

Brew a cup of black tea and, while hot, stir in the honey until dissolved. Add the lemon juice and the spirit if using, plus any spices, and stir. Sip warm. A caffeine-free herbal base (ginger, chamomile) works well if you want it for the evening without caffeine, and it is fine and common to make it with no alcohol at all.

How to make it genuinely good

A good hot toddy is balanced: enough honey to round it out, enough lemon to brighten, not so much spirit that it is harsh, and warm rather than scalding. Real honey and fresh lemon make a noticeable difference; fresh ginger adds a warming bite of its own. The non-alcoholic version with ginger and honey is excellent in its own right.

The catch

A hot toddy feels comforting with a sore throat mainly because a warm, honeyed drink is pleasant to swallow, and that is a real but modest comfort. What it is not is a treatment, and the alcohol does not help you recover; if anything it can disrupt sleep and leave you thirstier. The warmth, honey and lemon supply the comfort; the spirit is optional and traditional, nothing more. General information, not medical advice.

A hot toddy, at a glance

Element	Short rule
What it is	Hot tea or water, a spirit, honey and lemon; a warming nightcap
Tea base	A black tea or plain hot water; brew it properly, not stewed
Spirit	Whisky is classic; rum or brandy work; the alcohol is real
Honey and lemon	To taste; added off the boil so the aromatics survive
Clear note	A pleasant warming drink, not a treatment for colds; it contains alcohol

Reference noted

- Britannica: Tea

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teas · Use a cheap bottle and ordinary honey until you want better. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

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