

What's in English Breakfast Tea? Inside the Blend

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

What's in English Breakfast tea, in short: What's in English Breakfast tea? Assam, Ceylon, Kenyan and sometimes Keemun blend. History, brewing, vs Yorkshire/Irish/Scottish Breakfast.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for What's in English Breakfast Tea? Inside the Blend. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/whats-in-english-breakfast-tea/>*

"What is in English Breakfast tea" has a tidy answer that surprises people: it is not a single tea or a place, it is a recipe, a deliberate blend of robust black teas put together to be strong, brisk and to take milk well. Understanding that it is a blend, engineered for a job, explains everything about it.

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

What it actually is

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What it actually is , What's in English Breakfast Tea? Inside the Blend. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/whats-in-english-breakfast-tea/>*

English Breakfast is a blend of full bodied black teas, commonly drawing on Assam (for malt and body), Ceylon (for brightness and briskness) and African teas such as Kenyan (for colour and strength), with the exact mix varying by brand. There is no "English Breakfast plant"; the name describes the intended use, a strong morning cup that stands up to milk, not an origin. Each component is chosen for what it contributes to that target, which is why it is a designed product, not a single garden tea.

What it tastes like

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The blend is built to taste robust, brisk and full, with enough malt and colour to make a satisfying milky mug and enough briskness to feel refreshing rather than flat. It is deliberately consistent: the whole point of the blend is that it tastes the same every time, which is a genuine skill, not a shortcoming.

The health picture

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The health picture , What's in English Breakfast Tea? Inside the Blend. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/whats-in-english-breakfast-tea/*

The health picture is simply the black tea one: caffeine for a real morning lift, polyphenols, hydration, no miracle, and the biggest variable being whatever sugar you add. Most English Breakfast is brisk CTC style leaf made for fast strong extraction, which is exactly right for an everyday milky mug and the reason it gives less nuance and little re steeping than whole loose leaf, a fair trade for its job, not a flaw.

How to use it well

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for How to use it well , What's in English Breakfast Tea? Inside the Blend. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/whats-in-english-breakfast-tea/*

Use it for what it is: brew just off the boil for three to four minutes, milk to taste, as a dependable, consistent, good value everyday cup. Do not judge it by single origin connoisseur standards, it was never trying to be that, and do not expect it to re steep like whole leaf. Bought and brewed as the engineered everyday workhorse it really is, English Breakfast does its specific job genuinely well.

The history

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Tea historians give different dates and originators. The most commonly cited origin: Robert Drysdale, a Scottish tea merchant, blended a "Breakfast Tea" in Edinburgh in 1892. The blend caught on south of the border and acquired its "English" prefix in the 1900s.

An earlier alternative origin story: an American merchant named Richard Davies in New York blended a similar tea in the 1840s, and the "English Breakfast" name appeared in American advertising in the 1850s, possibly predating Drysdale's blend.

Either way, by the early 20th century English Breakfast was an established category of black tea blend. Queen Victoria reportedly adopted it during her stays at Balmoral, which gave the blend royal endorsement. By 1950 it was Britain's default tea, and it has remained so since.

English Breakfast tea at a glance

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Question

Short answer

What is English Breakfast tea?	A blend of black teas designed for a strong, full-bodied morning cup that takes milk well. Not a single tea variety, always a blend.
What's in the blend?	Typically a mix of Assam, Ceylon, Kenyan and sometimes Chinese Keemun black teas. Proportions vary by brand.
Who invented it?	The blend is generally attributed to Scottish tea merchant Drysdale in the 1890s. The term "English Breakfast" became widespread after Queen Victoria adopted it.
Why blended, not single-origin?	Consistency. Blending several origins delivers a reliable cup year-round regardless of any one origin's variable harvest. It's also cheaper per kg.
How is it different from Irish Breakfast?	Irish Breakfast is similar but typically uses more Assam, giving a slightly maltier, stronger, more malty cup.
How is it different from Scottish Breakfast?	Scottish Breakfast often emphasises Assam strength further and may include some Indonesian or strong Yunnan; designed for soft Scottish water.
How is it different from Yorkshire Tea?	Yorkshire Tea is a branded blend (Taylors of Harrogate). It's closer to English Breakfast than to Scottish/Irish but uses its own specific recipe.
Best way to drink it?	Strong brew, splash of milk, no sugar (or small amount). Designed for milk; doesn't need flavouring.

Reference noted

- [Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea](#)

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