Darjeeling autumn flush: the season nobody talks about

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Darjeeling gets picked in waves, and the autumn flush (picked from around October into November, after the monsoon has passed) is the one that rarely makes the marketing. First flush gets the fuss, second flush gets the muscatel reputation, and autumnal quietly turns out the most drinkable everyday Darjeeling of the year.

What it tastes like

Autumn Darjeeling is **darker, rounder and gentler** than the spring pickings. The cup is coppery rather than pale, the aroma leans towards ripe fruit, light spice and wood, and the brisk, green edge of a first flush is gone. It is the Darjeeling that takes a splash of milk without falling apart, though it is still best tried plain first.

Flush	Picked	Character
First	March to April	Pale, brisk, green and floral
Second	May to June	Amber, muscatel, fruity
Monsoon	July to September	Strong, plain, mostly used in blends
Autumn	October to November	Coppery, round, gently spiced

See the four flushes of Darjeeling for the full cycle, and first flush vs second flush for the famous two.

Why it is usually cheaper

Nothing to do with quality. Spring teas are scarce, fashionable and auctioned hard; autumn tea arrives at the end of the season when demand has moved on. The plants have grown through the monsoon, the leaves are larger and the resulting tea is less delicate, which is exactly why it suits an everyday pot.

If you have wanted to try a single-estate Darjeeling without spending a lot, autumn is the sensible entry point.

How to buy it

- **Look for the words "autumn flush" or "autumnal"** with a year. "Darjeeling" alone tells you nothing about the season.
- **Check the year.** Autumn tea is at its best within a year; it does not improve with keeping.
- **Check what it actually is.** Autumn collections can include black, green and oolong-style teas from the same gardens, which brew very differently.

- **Check the origin claim.** Darjeeling is a protected origin certified by the Tea Board of India; a "Darjeeling-style" blend is not the same thing. See Darjeeling tea.

On UK shelves, most Darjeeling is a blend rather than a single-season lot: Teapigs Darjeeling and Twinings Darjeeling are house blends, and a good place to learn the style before you buy a named-flush lot from a specialist.

How to brew it

Autumn flush takes a little more heat than a first flush: water at 90 to 95°C, 3 to 4 minutes, about 2.5g per 250ml. Taste it plain first. If you want milk, add a small amount at the end: this is the one flush that usually survives it.

Common questions

Is autumn flush the same as third flush?
Yes, "autumnal" and "third flush" describe the same picking.

Is it lower quality than first flush?
It is a different style, not a lower grade. Many drinkers prefer it for everyday drinking.

Will it taste muscatel?
Rarely. That grape-like note belongs to second flush.

Can I keep it until next year?
Better not to. Buy what you will drink within a year and store it sealed, cool and dark.

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