Fresh mint or dried mint for tea?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Both make good tea, and they make **different** tea.

- **Fresh mint** is bright, green and gentle. It tastes of the garden, with a softer cooling effect.
- **Dried mint** is concentrated and more sharply minty. Drying removes the water and leaves the aromatic oils behind, so a small amount goes a long way.

The rule of thumb from the kitchen applies here too: **dried herbs are about three times stronger than fresh by volume**. One tablespoon of chopped fresh mint is roughly one teaspoon of dried.

How much to use

Cup	Fresh mint	Dried mint
One mug (250ml)	A generous sprig, 8 to 10 leaves	1 teaspoon, or 1 tea bag
Small pot (500ml)	A small handful, 15 to 20 leaves	2 teaspoons, or 2 bags
Large pot (1 litre)	A big handful with stems	1 tablespoon, or 4 bags

Fresh mint: how to brew it

1. Rinse the mint under cold water: wash all fresh produce before using it. FDA: selecting and serving produce safely
2. Put the leaves in the mug or pot and **press them gently** with a spoon. Bruising releases the oils; shredding makes it grassy.
3. Pour on water at about 90°C, not a rolling boil.
4. Cover and leave for 5 minutes. Leaving the leaves in is fine: the flavour stays gentle.

Use the stems as well as the leaves; they carry flavour and hold the bunch together.

Spearmint is the classic for fresh mint tea, and it is what Moroccan mint tea uses, brewed with green tea and sugar. Peppermint is sharper and more cooling. See mint tea: peppermint, spearmint and what the cup actually does.

Dried mint: how to brew it

Dried mint and mint tea bags want the same treatment as any herbal infusion: **freshly boiled water, 3 to 5 minutes, covered**. Covering matters: the aroma compounds are volatile and a good part of them leave with the steam otherwise.

Twinings Pure Peppermint is 100% peppermint; Teapigs Peppermint Leaves uses larger pieces of leaf in a roomier bag. Full method in how to brew peppermint tea.

Which to choose

You want	Use
A light, fresh, garden-tasting cup	Fresh
A strong, cooling, after-dinner mint	Dried
Mint with green tea, Moroccan style	Fresh spearmint
Something in a flask or at work	Dried, in bags
Consistency, cup after cup	Dried
To use up a bunch before it wilts	Fresh

Growing and keeping it

Mint is famously easy to grow and famously invasive: keep it in a pot, not a border. It does well on a windowsill and will keep you in tea all summer. RHS: growing mint

- **Fresh:** stand the stems in a glass of water on the worktop, or wrap in damp kitchen paper in the fridge for up to a week.
- **Drying your own:** hang small bunches upside down somewhere warm, dark and airy for a week or two, then strip the leaves and store them airtight. Home-dried mint is much greener and fresher than shop-dried.

Common questions

Can I swap fresh for dried in a recipe?
Yes, using roughly three parts fresh to one part dried by volume, then taste.

Why is my fresh mint tea bitter?
Boiling water, over-long brewing, or leaves that were chopped rather than bruised.

Does fresh mint have caffeine?
No, mint is not tea. Only blends with tea leaves do.

Can I use mint from the garden centre?
Yes, if it is a culinary mint and has not been treated with anything you would not eat. Wash it well.

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