How to make a proper cup of tea while camping

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Camp tea goes wrong for boring reasons: water that never really boils, a stove used in the wrong place, and a brew made in a mug that has gone cold before the bag comes out. Deal with the water first, the stove second, and the tea last.

Water comes first

On a campsite with a mains tap, use the tap. Away from one, treat your water properly before you think about brewing.

Boiling is effective against germs in the water. The US CDC's guidance for camping and travel is to bring clear water to a **rolling boil for one minute**, or **three minutes above 2,000m (6,500ft)**, then let it cool. Filters vary in what they remove, and suspected chemical contamination needs a different source rather than boiling. CDC: water treatment when hiking, camping or travelling

Two things people get wrong:

- **A tea strainer is not a water filter.** They share a word and nothing else.
- **A kettle that has just started to steam has not boiled.** If you are treating water by boiling, wait for a proper rolling boil.

Stove sense

- **Cook and boil outside, never in a tent or an enclosed porch.** Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service warns that opening the flaps does not prevent a dangerous build-up of carbon monoxide. Camping fire safety
- Set the stove on a **firm, level surface**, away from long grass and away from the tent.
- Follow the **stove manufacturer's instructions** for fuel and pot size, and check local fire restrictions before you go.
- If the wind makes it unsafe, change the plan rather than moving the stove inside. A flask filled at home is a fine answer.

The brew itself

Camp cups are thin and the wind is cold, so tea loses heat fast. Two adjustments fix most of it:

1. **Pre-warm the cup** with a splash of hot water before you brew.
2. **Brew in a lidded vessel** (a small pot with a lid, or the cup with a lid on) for the full 3 to 4 minutes.

Then keep it simple: bags rather than loose leaf, one per cup, and take them out on time. A strong everyday tea handles cooling and milk powder better than anything delicate. Peppermint is the other camp favourite: Twinings Pure Peppermint needs no milk at all, which is one less thing to carry.

The kit list

Item	Why
Stove and fuel	Check it works before you leave
Pot or kettle with a lid	Faster boil, and the lid keeps heat in while brewing
Insulated mug with a lid	The difference between hot tea and lukewarm tea
Tea bags in a sealed bag	Keeps them dry
Small flask	For a brew you make before you set off
Milk powder or UHT portions	No fridge needed
A bag for rubbish	Used bags and wrappers come home with you

Little things that make it better

- **Fill the flask with boiling water for a minute first**, tip it out, then fill with tea: it stays hot much longer.
- **Carry milk powder:** rather than fresh milk, or drink it black and enjoy it.
- **Two people, one pot:** brew in the pot and pour, rather than juggling two mugs and one kettle.
- **Take the bags home.** Tea bags are not compost on a hillside, and many contain plastic.

Our best tea to take travelling covers choosing the tea, and brewing tea without equipment helps when you have even less kit.

Common questions

Can I brew straight from a stream?
Treat the water first. Boiling properly is the simplest method; filters and tablets have their own instructions.

Does water boil differently at altitude?
Yes, it boils at a lower temperature, which is why the CDC's advice extends the boiling time above 2,000m.

Is a Kelly kettle worth it?
It boils fast on twigs, which is excellent where fires are allowed. Check local rules first.

How do I keep milk?
Powder, UHT portions, or a small amount in a cool bag used the same day.

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