Why two teas with the same name taste completely different

From the teas.co.uk wiki

You liked a Darjeeling, bought another one, and it tasted like a different drink altogether. That is normal, and it is not a con. A tea name usually describes one of four things, and none of them is a flavour:

- **a place**: Darjeeling, Assam, Ceylon
- **a style of flavouring**: Earl Grey, jasmine, chai
- **a blend recipe**: English Breakfast, Afternoon Blend, builder's tea
- **a way of processing the leaf**: green, oolong, white

Two packs can share the name and share almost nothing else.

Place names: the same hillside, very different teas

Darjeeling is a protected origin: the Tea Board of India certifies tea grown and made in the defined area. What it cannot tell you is which garden, which harvest and which style.

A first flush Darjeeling, picked in spring, is pale, brisk and almost green. A second flush from the same estate is amber, round and muscatel. An autumn flush is darker and softer again. All three are real Darjeeling. See first flush vs second flush and the four flushes of Darjeeling.

Blends complicate it further: Teapigs Darjeeling and Twinings Darjeeling are both Darjeeling, and both are blended to a house style rather than sold as a single estate lot.

Flavour-style names: no recipe behind them

"Earl Grey" simply means black tea flavoured with bergamot. Nobody owns it. One brand uses a Ceylon base with a light hand; another uses a strong Assam base and heavy flavouring; a third adds cornflowers or lemon peel. They can taste completely different and all be correctly labelled.

The same is true of chai, jasmine and "breakfast" blends. English Breakfast is a house recipe: usually Assam, Ceylon and African teas, mixed to each brand's taste and adjusted year to year as crops change.

Even the same product changes

Tea is an agricultural product. Blenders buy each season's crop and adjust the recipe to keep a brand tasting consistent, but weather, harvest and sourcing all move. A pack you buy in autumn may be blended from a different lot than the one you bought in spring. Storage matters too: a box that has sat open on a

warm shelf for six months is a different drink from a fresh one.

What to read on the pack instead

Detail on the pack	What it tells you
Region or estate	Where the leaf grew, and how specific the claim is
Harvest or flush	Which picking, and therefore the style
Leaf grade or format	Whole leaf, broken, fannings: how fast and strong it brews
Full ingredient list	Whether it is pure tea, blended or flavoured
Brewing instructions	The strength and temperature the maker intended

The more of those a seller gives you, the more repeatable your next purchase is.

How to buy the same cup twice

1. Write down the **exact product name and pack size**, not just the style.
2. Note the **batch or best-before code** from a pack you loved.
3. Keep your own brewing notes: leaf weight, water volume, time.
4. When comparing two teas, brew them the same way, and taste before adding milk.

Our tea flavour guide gives you words for what you notice, and how to judge tea quality covers what is worth paying more for.

Common questions

Is a named estate always better?
No, but it is more specific. You are more likely to be able to buy the same thing again.

Does a protected name guarantee quality?
It guarantees origin, not that you will like it. Darjeeling covers everything from delicate to ordinary.

Why does my usual brand taste different this year?
Blends are adjusted as crops change, and your pack may be older or stored differently. Try a fresh pack before changing brands.

Is an expensive tin worth it?
Sometimes. Judge the leaf information, not the packaging: a plain pouch with a garden, harvest and grade on it tells you more than a beautiful tin with only a style name.

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