

How to infuse tea into cream and custard

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Tea and cream get on beautifully — Earl Grey, chai, jasmine, chamomile and hojicha all infuse well — and the technique is simple. The two things that go wrong are using too little tea, and losing liquid to the leaves without adjusting for it.

The quantities that work

As a starting point for a noticeable but not overpowering flavour:

Dairy	Tea	Time
300ml cream or milk	3–4 tea bags, or 8–10g loose leaf	15 minutes off the heat
500ml	5–6 bags, or 12–15g loose	15–20 minutes

Use more than you would for a drink. The dairy fat mutes tea, and sugar mutes it again, so a "normal" strength infusion disappears in a finished dessert.

Hot infusion: the default

1. Heat the cream or milk until it is **steaming, not boiling**.
2. Take it off the heat, add the tea, cover and leave for 15 minutes.
3. Strain, pressing the leaves or bags gently.
4. **Top the quantity back up** with fresh cream or milk to the volume the recipe asked for.

That last step is the one people skip. Tea bags hold a surprising amount of liquid — several tablespoons — and a custard made with 250ml instead of 300ml sets differently.

Do not boil the dairy with the tea in it, and do not leave black tea infusing for an hour: both extract tannin, which tastes drying and can make a custard grainy.

Cold infusion: for delicate teas

For jasmine, green tea or a very floral blend, steep the tea in **cold** cream in the fridge for 4 to 12 hours, then strain. It takes longer but keeps the perfume, which heat drives off.

Cold infusion is also the safer route if you are nervous about scalding cream. Keep it in the fridge the whole time and use it the same day.

Making a tea custard

The tea goes in first, the eggs second.

1. Infuse the milk or cream as above and strain it.
2. Bring it back to a bare simmer.
3. Whisk yolks and sugar, pour the hot infused dairy over them slowly, whisking.
4. Return to a low heat and stir constantly until it thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon. Do not let it boil.
5. Strain again into a cold bowl, and cool it quickly if you are not using it straight away.

If you want certainty about egg safety, follow the FSA's advice on cooking food thoroughly, and use pasteurised eggs for anything that will not be fully cooked. [FSA: chilling and food safety](#)

Which teas work in dairy

Tea	Works because
Earl Grey	Bergamot cuts through cream; the classic
Masala chai	Spice carries through fat and sugar
Hojicha	Roasted, nutty, excellent in ice cream
Chamomile	Honeyed and gentle; good in set creams
Jasmine	Lovely, but infuse cold to keep the perfume
Lapsang souchong	Powerful; use half the quantity

Our [baking with matcha and tea](#) page covers the other route — putting ground leaf straight into a mixture — and there are two worked examples in the recipe collection: [peppermint chocolate pots](#) and [chamomile creams with roasted apple](#).

Common questions

Can I use tea bags rather than loose leaf?

Yes, and they are easier to remove. Squeeze them gently against the pan.

Why is my tea cream bitter?

Boiled with the tea in, or left too long. Steaming, 15 minutes, then strain.

Will it split?

Dairy splits with acid and hard boiling. Tea on its own will not split cream; a fruit or hibiscus blend might.

Can I infuse into double cream for whipping?

Yes — infuse, strain, top back up to the original volume, then chill thoroughly before whipping. Warm cream will not whip.

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