Why does my jasmine tea taste soapy?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

Soapiness is the usual complaint about jasmine tea, and it almost always comes down to one of five things. Work through them in order: the first two fix most cases.

1. The water was too hot

Jasmine tea is green tea underneath. Boiling water scorches it, pulls out bitterness and pushes the floral aroma into something sharp and perfumed.

Fix: brew at about 80°C. Boil the kettle, then leave it for two or three minutes, or add a splash of cold water to the pot.

2. It brewed too long, or there was too much leaf

Jasmine is the aroma sitting on top of a light tea. Over-extract the tea and the balance tips: the base turns bitter and the perfume turns soapy.

Fix: 2 to 3g per 250ml, 2 minutes for a mug, and take the leaves or bag out when the time is up. Taste at 90 seconds if you are unsure: you can always give it longer. Full method in how to brew jasmine tea.

3. It is flavoured, not scented

Real jasmine tea is **scented**: tea is layered with fresh blossom over several nights so it absorbs the perfume, and the spent flowers are sieved out. Cheaper products skip that and spray on jasmine flavouring instead, which sits on the surface and tastes more like perfume than flowers.

Fix: read the ingredients. "Green tea, jasmine flowers" is scented. "Green tea, natural flavouring" is flavoured. More on this in jasmine tea explained and Fuzhou jasmine tea.

4. The tea is old

Jasmine fades, and as it fades it goes dusty and stale rather than fresh and floral. An open box that has sat in a warm kitchen for a year will taste musty-soapy however carefully you brew it.

Fix: buy smaller packs, keep them sealed, cool and dark, and drink jasmine tea within a few months of opening.

5. Something in the cup, or in you

Two less obvious causes:

- **Residue.** Washing-up liquid in a mug, or an infuser that has held strongly scented tea, will read as soap. Rinse thoroughly with hot water and try a different cup.
- **You.** Jasmine's aroma is rich in floral compounds such as linalool, and some people find high-linalool aromas soapy in the same way some people find coriander soapy. If a well-brewed, well-sourced jasmine still tastes of soap to you, it may simply not be your tea.

If that is the case, try a lighter option: jasmine pearls with fewer scenting rounds, a jasmine white tea, or a different floral tea altogether such as osmanthus, which smells of apricot rather than blossom.

The quick fix, in one go

Brew Twinings Jasmine Green Tea or your own leaf like this and taste again:

- 1 bag or 2.5g of leaf
- 250ml water at 80°C
- 2 minutes, then remove
- No sugar, no milk, taste it plain first

If it is still soapy, the problem is the product or your palate, not the method.

Common questions

Should jasmine tea be bitter?
No. Bitterness means the water was too hot or the brew too long.

Can I rescue an over-brewed cup?
Dilute it with hot water. It will be weak, but not soapy.

Are jasmine pearls better?
They are usually a higher grade and more concentrated, so use fewer (about 3g per 250ml) and they are less likely to taste harsh. See jasmine pearls.

Does jasmine tea have caffeine?
Yes. The base is green tea. Only a flower-only infusion is caffeine-free.

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