How to Make Tea for a Crowd: 20, 50 or 100 Cups

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea for a crowd, in short:** Allow one tea bag per cup: 20 cups needs 20 bags, 50 needs 50 and 100 needs 100, plus a few spare. At 200ml a cup that is 4, 10 and 20 litres of boiling water. Brew in pots filled from an urn, not in the urn itself, and put the milk on the table.

Making tea for a hall full of people is the same job as making one cup, multiplied. One bag per cup, properly boiling water, a few minutes, bag out, milk last. The work is in the planning: enough bags, enough hot water at the right moment, and somewhere for the tea to brew that is not the urn.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in November 2026.

The quantities

Cups	Tea bags	With 10% spare	Water at 200ml a cup	Milk at 25ml a cup
20	20	22	4 litres	0.5 litres
50	50	55	10 litres	1.25 litres
100	100	110	20 litres	2.5 litres

The bag count follows the UK Tea and Infusions Association measure of one tea bag per cup. The 200ml cup and the 25ml of milk are our planning assumptions, so scale them up if you are serving mugs.

Two more things. Cups are not people: at a long event many guests come back for a second, so count cups, not heads. And not everyone takes milk. The association reports that 57% of UK tea drinkers add dairy milk and 10% a plant milk, so the milk column is on the generous side. Our guide to how much milk goes in tea has the detail for a single cup.

The urn method, step by step

1. **Fill and switch on early.** A full urn takes a long while to come to the boil. Check its instructions and time it before the day.
2. **Keep the urn for water only.** Tea bags left sitting in an urn carry on brewing, so the last cups come out far stronger than the first.
3. **Warm the teapots** with a little boiling water, then empty them.

4. **Bags into the pots.** One per cup the pot holds is the standard measure. Yorkshire Tea's home guide uses fewer, two bags in a regular teapot, so cut back if you want a milder pot. See how many teabags per pot.
5. **Fill from the urn at a full boil.** Black tea wants water at 90 to 98°C.
6. **Brew for three to five minutes,** then lift the bags out so the pot does not stew.
7. **Pour, and let people add their own milk.**

No urn? Kettles, pots and flasks

For 20 cups, kettles and a couple of large teapots will do. Divide the litres in the table by the size of your kettle to see how many boils you need, and start the first one before guests arrive.

For bigger numbers without an urn, brew in rounds and hold the finished tea, bags removed, in insulated jugs or pump flasks. Our guide to making tea in a flask that still tastes good covers how to keep it from going flat.

Milk, sugar and the rest of the table

- **Milk** in jugs, with a plant milk alongside. Whether it goes in first is the guest's business: see milk first or tea first.
- **Sugar** and plenty of teaspoons.
- **A decaf pot,** clearly labelled. Our best decaf tea guide lists the options.
- **Biscuits.** Put out a sharing pack or two. See the best biscuit to dunk in tea.

What to buy

For 100 cups, one large pack covers it with plenty left over: Tetley Original, 400 tea bags, PG Tips Original, 400 tea bags or Yorkshire Tea 240. Tetley also makes an 1,100 bag catering pack, which we list but which is out of stock at the time of this review.

For 20 or 50 cups an ordinary 80 box is enough. The big packs are compared in the best 400 count tea bags and Yorkshire Tea 240: running a busy kitchen on one box, and every size is on the everyday tea bags shelf .

Big packs for big numbers

Packs of 240 and 400 that cover 100 cups with tea to spare.



Tetley Original English Breakfast, 400 Tea Bags 1.25kg

~~£11.00~~ Original price was: £11.00.£8.80Current price is: £8.80.

View pack and details ?



PG Tips Original English Breakfast, 400 Tea Bags 1.16kg

~~£8.00~~ Original price was: £8.00.£6.40Current price is: £6.40.

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Taylors of Harrogate Yorkshire Tea 240, 750g

~~£11.00~~ Original price was: £11.00.£8.80Current price is: £8.80.

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PG Tips Original, 240 Tea Bags 696g

~~£9.00~~ Original price was: £9.00.£7.20Current price is: £7.20.

View pack and details ?

See all everyday tea bags ?

Autumn Sale prices shown. The sale ends on 24 December.

These are products sold by teas.co.uk. Every order includes a free tea sample, and UK delivery is free over £35. Check each product page for the latest price, availability and pack information.

Common questions

How many tea bags do I need for 100 cups?

One hundred, plus about ten spare. A 240 or 400 pack covers it with tea left for next time.

How much milk for 100 cups of tea?

About 2.5 litres if every cup takes a 25ml splash. Not everyone has milk, so that leaves a margin.

Can I make the tea in advance?

Brew it as close to serving as you can. If you must make it ahead, take the bags out after brewing and keep the tea in insulated flasks without milk.

Decaf and biscuits for the table

A decaf pot and a sharing pack finish the job.



Tetley Decaf English Breakfast, 120 Tea Bags 375g

~~£4.75~~ Original price was: £4.75.£3.80Current price is: £3.80.
View pack and details ?



Taylors of Harrogate Decaffeinated Yorkshire, 160 Tea Bags 500g

~~£11.00~~ Original price was: £11.00.£8.80Current price is: £8.80.
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Border Classic Biscuit Sharing Pack, 400g

~~£5.50~~ Original price was: £5.50.£4.40Current price is: £4.40.

View pack and details ?

See all biscuits ?

Autumn Sale prices shown. The sale ends on 24 December.

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Reference noted

The bag measure, water temperature and brewing time are from the UK Tea and Infusions Association brewing guide and the milk figures from its FAQs; teapot quantities, warming the pot and the four to five minute brew are from Yorkshire Tea's proper brew guide. Water and milk volumes are our own arithmetic.

More from the tea wiki

- Yorkshire Tea Pack Sizes: 40, 80, 160 and 240 Compared
- Loose Leaf Starter Kit: A Strainer and Three Familiar Blends
- Why tea tastes weak in a big mug (and how to fix it)
- How many teabags per pot?
- Best 400-Count Tea Bags UK: PG Tips vs Tetley
- Yorkshire Tea 240: Running a Busy Kitchen on One Box
- How Many Cups of Tea a Day?
- The whole Tea Wiki, A to Z

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