Jin Jun Mei: Fujian's Bud Only Black Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **The headline:** Jin Jun Mei is a modern unsmoked Wuyi bud only black tea, naturally sweet and complex, a fine cup but scarce and heavily faked. Origin, production and how to spot a real one.

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

Jin Jun Mei ("Golden Beautiful Eyebrows") is the premium unsmoked Wuyi black tea that emerged from the same Fujian region as lapsang souchong but produces dramatically different cups. Made from only the youngest tippy buds of *Camellia sinensis* grown in the Wuyi Mountains, Jin Jun Mei is a relatively recent creation (developed in 2005) that has rapidly become one of the most prestigious Chinese black teas. The cup is sweet, fruity, complex, and refined; the unsmoked production reveals the underlying character of Wuyi black tea that lapsang's smoke layer typically masks. Jin Jun Mei represents the modern direction of premium Chinese black tea production.

This guide covers everything about Jin Jun Mei: the recent origin story, the bud only production, the proper brewing approach, and how it fits into the Wuyi tea family alongside lapsang souchong.

The Jin Jun Mei origin

Jin Jun Mei was developed in 2005 by tea masters in the Tongmu village of the Wuyi Mountains, the same village that's the historical heart of lapsang souchong production. The motivation was creating a premium unsmoked black tea using the highest quality bud only material from Wuyi tea bushes; the result was a tea that became immediately popular in Chinese premium tea markets and rapidly spread internationally.

The "Jin Jun Mei" name translates roughly as "Golden Beautiful Eyebrows", referring to the visual appearance of the dried tea: the buds are covered with golden tipped down (the "golden") and curl into eyebrow like shapes during processing (the "eyebrows"). High quality Jin Jun Mei has visibly more golden tips than standard black tea; the gold tip ratio is one of the visual quality indicators.

The development of Jin Jun Mei represents the broader modern Chinese tea industry's interest in premium positioning beyond the traditional famous teas. Where lapsang souchong has been produced for 400+ years, Jin Jun Mei is a 21st century innovation that's quickly become one of the most sought after premium Chinese black teas. For the related lapsang see the lapsang souchong overview.

The Jin Jun Mei production process

Jin Jun Mei production is dramatically more labour intensive than typical black tea:

1. **Plucking** only the youngest unopened buds are picked; this is similar to silver needle white tea production. Roughly 60,000 to 70,000 buds are needed to produce 500g of finished Jin Jun Mei
2. **Withering:** the buds are spread for moisture loss
3. **Rolling:** the buds are gently rolled to start oxidation
4. **Oxidation:** full oxidation as standard black tea
5. **Drying:** dried at low temperatures; importantly, no pine smoke drying step (this is what distinguishes Jin Jun Mei from traditional lapsang)
6. **Sorting:** the dried buds are sorted by size, shape, and gold tip ratio

The bud only composition combined with the unsmoked drying produces a dramatically different cup than lapsang souchong despite sharing geographic origin. Where lapsang emphasises smoky character that masks the underlying tea, Jin Jun Mei celebrates the natural sweetness, fruitiness, and complexity of premium Wuyi black tea.

The Jin Jun Mei flavour profile

Quality Jin Jun Mei has a distinctive flavour profile:

- **Sweet honey character:** the dominant note; significantly sweeter than typical black tea
- **Stone fruit notes:** peach, apricot, sometimes plum character
- **Subtle floral hints:** rose or orchid undertones in premium grades
- **Smooth refined mouthfeel:** no astringency due to bud only composition
- **Bright amber to copper cup colour**
- **Long sweet finish:** the cup lingers pleasantly
- **Multiple infusion potential** gives 4 to 6 excellent infusions

The natural sweetness without added sweetener is one of the most distinctive features. For drinkers used to standard black tea (which is often slightly bitter or astringent), Jin Jun Mei's smooth sweet character is a revelation; the cup tastes almost like it has natural fruit honey notes built in.

How to brew Jin Jun Mei actually

Jin Jun Mei benefits from gongfu style multiple infusion brewing:

1. **Use freshly drawn cold water** brought to just off boiling (90 to 95°C; slightly cooler than full boiling to preserve the delicate character)
2. **Use 5g of leaves** per 150ml gaiwan or 1 to 2 teaspoons per 200ml cup for Western brewing
3. **Rinse the leaves:** brief water pour to wake the tea
4. **First infusion** 30 to 45 seconds; the bud only character extracts quickly
5. **Subsequent infusions:** increase brewing time slightly each round
6. **Drink neat:** no milk; the natural sweetness and complex character would be masked

For Western brewing without gongfu equipment, 1 teaspoon per cup, 90°C water, 3 minutes brewing produces excellent results. Temperatures for other black teas are in the water temperatures guide.

What we stock

Browse the black tea range. Jin Jun Mei availability in mainstream British retail is limited; specialty Chinese tea importers provide the most comprehensive options. For comparisons see also: Teapigs, Twinings, Hyson.

The verdict

Jin Jun Mei is one of the most rewarding premium black teas in modern Chinese production. The combination of bud only labour intensive production, natural sweetness without added sweetener, complex flavour profile, and multiple infusion potential makes it one of the most distinctive premium experiences available.

For drinkers exploring beyond standard British black tea, Jin Jun Mei represents what black tea can really be when produced from premium materials with refined processing. The unsmoked Wuyi character is dramatically different from typical Indian or Sri Lankan black tea; the natural sweetness and stone fruit notes provide flavour dimensions unavailable in mass market black tea.

The price reflects the labour intensive production; quality Jin Jun Mei typically costs £40 to £150+ per 100g. For drinkers committed to premium tea exploration, the price premium is justified by the cup quality difference.

For the wider context see the black tea overview, the lapsang souchong overview, the Da Hong Pao overview, the silver needle overview, the loose leaf brewing guide, the water temperatures guide, and the oolong overview.

Buying genuine Jin Jun Mei

One practical fact matters more than any tasting note: authentic Jin Jun Mei is a recent, legitimately scarce tea (roughly 60,000 to 70,000 hand picked buds per 500g), so a cheap one sold widely under the name is almost certainly an imitation. Use price and availability as your first check, then judge the cup: the real thing is smooth, honeyed and complex, with no smoke and no rough edge. The companion Jin Jun Mei explained guide is the full buyer-protection piece, and the how to judge tea quality guide takes the same verify-the-source approach. Explore premium leaf across the black tea range, the Chinese tea selection, or the full tea shop.

Related teas worth a look: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Browse the full tea range; orders to the UK cost nothing to deliver once they pass £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · At Jin Jun Mei prices, cost per cup comes first. Loose leaf mostly wins; a bag sometimes

keeps pace.

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