London Fog: The Vanilla Earl Grey Latte

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **What it actually is:** The London Fog is an Earl Grey and vanilla milk drink invented in Canada, not a British tradition; really pleasant and far cheaper made at home.

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

The London Fog is the Earl Grey and vanilla milky drink that's become one of the more popular modern coffee shop tea drinks despite the misleadingly British name. Despite the name, the London Fog is actually a Canadian invention, created in Vancouver in the 2000s and named for the perceived "London" character of Earl Grey tea. The drink combines strong brewed Earl Grey tea with steamed milk and vanilla syrup, producing a comforting alternative to coffee shop lattes that retains the bergamot character of Earl Grey while adding milky vanilla sweetness.

The London Fog origin

The London Fog was created in the early 2000s at Buckwheat Bakery and Cafe in Vancouver, Canada. The original creator (a young woman whose pregnancy made her avoid coffee) ordered a barista to create a tea based latte; the resulting Earl Grey with steamed milk and vanilla drink became a regular menu item and spread across Vancouver's cafe scene through the 2000s.

The name "London Fog" was chosen for the drink's Earl Grey association (perceived as British) and its foggy grey colour from the milk. The name is technically misleading; the drink isn't British and isn't traditional London cafe culture. By the late 2000s and 2010s, the London Fog had spread internationally; modern Starbucks, Costa, and many independent cafes offer London Fog or similar Earl Grey lattes.

For the wider Earl Grey context see the Earl Grey overview.

The London Fog components

A standard London Fog has several components:

- **Earl Grey tea base:** brewed strong; bergamot character is essential
- **Steamed milk:** traditionally dairy; oat milk and other plant based options work well
- **Vanilla syrup:** typically 1 to 2 pumps in coffee shop versions
- **Optional foam:** frothed milk top in some versions

- **Optional honey or lavender** some variations include these additions

The drink occupies a similar position to a chai latte or matcha latte; tea based hot milky drink that provides alternative to coffee based espresso drinks. The Earl Grey base distinguishes it from chai or matcha; the vanilla syrup provides the sweetness that balances the bergamot.

How to make a London Fog at home

Home London Fog preparation is straightforward:

1. **Brew Earl Grey strong** 2 tea bags or 2 teaspoons of loose leaf in 100ml of just boiled water for 4 to 5 minutes
2. **Heat 200ml of milk:** traditional dairy or oat milk; warm but don't boil
3. **Add vanilla syrup or vanilla extract** 1 to 2 teaspoons of vanilla syrup, or 1/4 teaspoon of vanilla extract plus a teaspoon of sugar
4. **Combine in a tall mug** Earl Grey first, then warm milk poured over
5. **Optional:** froth the milk for foam topping
6. **Optional:** add a small amount of honey for richer sweetness
7. **Drink hot**

The home version is significantly cheaper than coffee shop London Fog (£0.30 to £0.50 vs £3.50 to £4.50) and lets you control sweetness and ingredient quality. For drinkers who enjoy London Fog, building home preparation routine provides accessible regular drinking without the commercial cost.

London Fog variations

Several variations have developed:

Lavender London Fog adds dried lavender or lavender syrup; produces more floral character. The lavender complements the bergamot Earl Grey naturally; this variation is increasingly common in cafe menus. See the lavender overview.

Honey London Fog replaces vanilla syrup with honey; produces more natural sweetness alongside the Earl Grey character. Particularly good with quality wildflower or orange blossom honey.

Iced London Fog summer version; uses cold brewed Earl Grey, cold milk, vanilla syrup, ice. The cold version is increasingly popular as summer alternative to hot London Fog.

Earl Grey latte (no vanilla) simpler version without vanilla; just Earl Grey and steamed milk. The traditional approach for drinkers who don't want vanilla character.

London Fog with cream richer version using cream instead of milk; much higher in calories, but a real treat.

Decaf London Fog uses decaf Earl Grey; suitable for evening drinking without caffeine impact. See the decaf vs caffeine free comparison.

London Fog cake/dessert the flavour combination has expanded beyond drinks; London Fog cupcakes, cookies, and other baked goods are increasingly available.

London Fog vs related drinks

Comparison with related tea milk syrup drinks:

Drink	Tea base	Sweetener	Characteristic
London Fog	Earl Grey	Vanilla syrup	Bergamot + vanilla, smooth
Chai latte	Spiced black tea	Sugar/syrup	Spiced, complex, warming
Matcha latte	Matcha	Sugar/syrup	Vivid green, vegetal sweet
Hojicha latte	Roasted green tea	Sugar/syrup	Toasted, comforting, low caffeine
Dirty chai	Chai + espresso	Sugar/syrup	Spiced + coffee strength
Earl Grey latte (no vanilla)	Earl Grey	None or minimal	Pure bergamot + milk

For drinkers exploring tea milk syrup drinks broadly, having a few favourites across the categories provides variety. London Fog, chai latte, and matcha latte cover the most popular three; adding hojicha latte for evening or seasonal drinking expands the repertoire usefully. See the chai vs chai latte comparison and the hojicha overview.

Why the London Fog has succeeded

The London Fog has succeeded as a coffee shop drink for several reasons:

- **Tea alternative to coffee drinks:** fits the espresso machine workflow without requiring coffee
- **Recognisable name:** the British association makes it feel familiar
- **Universally accessible flavour:** the vanilla and bergamot combination is broadly appealing
- **Caffeine moderate:** less than coffee for caffeine sensitive consumers
- **Photogenic:** the milky tea with foam works for social media
- **Simple preparation:** baristas can make it quickly using existing equipment
- **Customisable:** fits modern coffee shop customisation expectations

The success has driven broader interest in tea based coffee shop drinks; matcha lattes, chai lattes, and the broader tea latte category have grown alongside the London Fog's popularity.

The sugar caveat

One important practical consideration: commercial London Fog has significant sugar content. A standard 16oz Starbucks London Fog with full vanilla syrup contains approximately 25 to 30g of sugar; comparable coffee shop versions are similar. For occasional treat drinking this is fine; for regular consumption, the sugar load matters.

For drinkers wanting London Fog character with less sugar:

- Order half syrup at coffee shops (significant reduction)
- Use less vanilla syrup at home (1/2 to 1 teaspoon vs typical 2 teaspoons)
- Use real vanilla extract plus minimal sugar instead of syrup
- Replace syrup with a small amount of honey for natural sweetness

- Use unsweetened plant milk to reduce other sugar sources

The home version provides much better control over sweetness than coffee shop versions; for daily London Fog drinkers, home preparation is significantly healthier.

What we stock

Browse the Earl Grey range. The most bought Earl Grey teas suitable for London Fog on teas.co.uk:

- True English Tea (T.E.T) British Mix Collection, 30 Tea Bags 57.5g
- Lipton Black Earl Grey With Italian Bergamot, 20 Tea Bags 32g
- Tetley Earl Grey, 50 Tea Bags 125g
- Teapigs Darjeeling Earl Grey, 15 Tea Bags 37.5g
- Brew Tea Co Earl Grey Proper, 15 Tea Bags 45g
- Clipper Organic Fairtrade Earl Grey Tea, 80 Unbleached Tea Bags 200g

For comparisons across the wider Earl Grey landscape, see also: Twinings, Teapigs, Clipper, Pukka.

Worth making at home

The London Fog is one of the more successful modern tea inventions, and a very pleasant drink despite its misleadingly British name. The combination of Earl Grey character, vanilla sweetness, and milky comfort produces a drink that suits drinkers who like Earl Grey but want something more elaborate than a standard cup of tea.

For drinkers who enjoy London Fog at coffee shops, building home preparation routine provides much better cost benefit; home London Fog is dramatically cheaper than commercial versions and lets you control sweetness and ingredient quality. The technique is straightforward enough that most drinkers can master it within a few attempts.

For drinkers exploring tea based alternatives to coffee drinks, the London Fog provides accessible introduction; the Earl Grey character is more familiar to British drinkers than the matcha or chai alternatives. From there, exploring the broader tea latte category (matcha latte, chai latte, hojicha latte) provides ongoing variety.

Mind the sugar content for daily drinking; the commercial versions can have significant sugar load. For occasional treats this is fine; for regular consumption, the home version with controlled sweetness provides much better daily option.

For the wider context see the Earl Grey overview, the Earl Grey vs Lady Grey comparison, the chai overview , the chai vs chai latte comparison, the matcha overview, the hojicha overview, the lavender overview, and the Twinings curator review.

Related on the wiki: How to Make a London Fog, Explained.

The teas that come up around this subject: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Pop into the tea shop for the rest of the Earl Grey shelf; UK shipping is free from £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Made at home, a London Fog is cheap per cup, and that is the figure to compare. Loose Earl Grey tends to win; supermarket bags sometimes keep up.

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