Herbal and Fruit Infusions

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Herbal at a glance:** Herbal and fruit infusions contain no true tea, so they are naturally caffeine-free. The simple guide to chamomile, peppermint, hibiscus and the rest.

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

Strictly speaking, herbal and fruit "teas" aren't tea at all. The word "tea" properly refers to a drink made from the leaves of *Camellia sinensis*, the plant behind every black, green, white, oolong and pu erh tea on the shelf. Anything else is an **infusion** (the European word) or a **tisane** (the French one). The categories are different in chemistry, brewing, and effect.

That said, "herbal tea" is the term in common use and trying to correct it everywhere is a losing battle. We use it interchangeably here. The distinction worth keeping is that herbal infusions contain **zero caffeine** naturally, no decaffeination process needed, and that's the main reason most people buy them.

This guide covers the herbal and fruit infusion category: the major herbal ingredients, the fruit ingredients, the proper brewing approach, the caffeine question, the health claim scepticism, and the major commercial brands worth knowing. For the wider context see the herbal tea overview.

The herbal tea categories

The herbal tea world divides into several distinct sub categories:

Classic herbal infusions:

- Chamomile, the universally popular evening sleep tea
- Peppermint, refreshing and often drunk after meals
- Lemon balm, gentle citrus character with mild sleep effects
- Verbena (lemon verbena), bright lemony herbal
- Lavender, floral and gentle, used lightly

Spice based herbal teas:

- Ginger, warming and useful for nausea
- Cinnamon, sweet and warming
- Cardamom, complex aromatic spice

- Turmeric, golden and earthy
- Fennel, aniseed flavoured after dinner cup

Fruit and floral teas:

- Hibiscus, tart and refreshing
- Rosehip, vitamin C source
- Berry blends, mixed fruit infusions
- Rose petals, floral and aromatic
- Jasmine flowers, sweet and perfumed

Root and bark teas:

- Liquorice root, naturally sweet (with blood pressure cautions)
- Marshmallow root, a traditional choice for sore throats
- Dandelion root, a common blend ingredient
- Burdock root, a traditional herbal root

The common herbal ingredients and what they do

Ingredient	Cup character	Common claim
Peppermint	Cool, clean, sharp menthol finish	Eases digestion. Strong evidence for IBS symptom reduction
Chamomile	Soft, slightly grassy, honeyed	Sleep / relaxation. Mild evidence for relaxation; not a sedative
Lemon balm	Lemony, soft, slightly herbaceous	Stress / sleep. Modest research support
Ginger	Warming, spicy, a clean burn at the back of the throat	Nausea, digestion. Long used for travel sickness and morning sickness
Liquorice root	Sweet, slightly anise, very distinctive	Adds natural sweetness to blends; some digestive use. Don't drink in large quantities; affects blood pressure
Fennel	Aniseed like, slightly floral	Mostly taken after rich meals. Long European tradition
Nettle	Spinachy, mineral, surprisingly drinkable	Mineral source. Naturally high in iron and silica
Lavender	Floral, soapy if overused	Relaxation. Used in small proportions in sleep blends
Echinacea	Earthy, slightly bitter, distinctive tongue tingle	Cold prevention/duration. Modest clinical evidence
Turmeric	Earthy, slightly peppery, vivid yellow	antioxidant. Bioavailability challenges at cup amounts
Sage	Strong, pungent, slightly sharp	Hot flush relief. Some clinical support

Ingredient	Cup character	Common claim
Spearmint	Sweeter than peppermint, less menthol	PCOS related androgen reduction. Multiple clinical trials

For more on individual herbs see the chamomile overview, the peppermint overview, the ginger tea overview , the echinacea overview, the turmeric overview, the fennel overview, the hibiscus overview, the lemon balm overview, the valerian overview, the lavender overview, and the liquorice overview.

The common fruit ingredients

Ingredient	Cup character
Hibiscus (karkadé)	Tart, ruby red, lemon bright. The base of most "berry" infusions despite not being a berry. Naturally lowers blood pressure modestly; worth knowing if you're already on hypertension medication
Rosehip	Tangy, fruity, often paired with hibiscus. High in vitamin C
Apple (dried chunks)	Sweet, gentle, the "background" of most fruit blends. Cheap to source so used as a bulker
Orange peel	Bright citrus, slightly bitter from the rind. Common in winter blends
Berries (blackberry, raspberry, blueberry, elderberry)	Jammy, sweet, often sharper than expected. The actual fruit content is usually small; the colour and bulk come from hibiscus
Lemon (zest, leaves, lemongrass, lemon balm)	Different lemon notes from each. Lemongrass is most "lemon y"; lemon balm is softer
Cranberry	Tart, ruby, often combined with apple in winter fruit blends
Mango, pineapple, passion fruit	Tropical sweetness; common in summer fruit infusions
Strawberry	Sweet, jam like; popular in berry blends

The naturally caffeine free non tea drinks

Beyond the herbal tea and fruit category, several other naturally caffeine free drinks fit alongside herbal infusions:

- **Rooibos:** the South African red bush plant. Cup most similar to traditional black tea; takes milk well. See the rooibos overview
- **Honeybush:** similar to rooibos but with natural honey like sweetness. See the honeybush overview
- **Yerba mate:** the South American caffeinated drink (technical exception to the caffeine free rule). See the yerba mate overview

How to brew herbal and fruit infusions

Different from tea; these aren't going to get bitter, so over brewing is fine and actually preferred for stronger cups.

- **Water** 95 to 100°C (full boiling). Herbs and dried fruits don't have the delicate amino acids that real tea does, so heat doesn't damage them
- **Leaf/ingredient amount** 2 to 3g per cup, or 1 tea bag
- **Steep time** 5 to 10 minutes. Some blends benefit from 15. The cup just gets stronger, not bitter
- **Cover the cup or pot** while it steeps; many herbal aromatics are volatile and will evaporate from an open mug. The fix is just a saucer over the top

For roots and seeds (ginger, fennel, liquorice), longer brewing is needed; 10 to 15 minutes for full extraction.

Caffeine: definitely none, with two caveats

Pure herbal and fruit infusions contain **zero caffeine**. The exceptions:

- **Yerba mate** South American. Looks herbal, contains as much caffeine as black tea. If you see it in a "herbal" box, check the label
- **Guarana:** sometimes added to "energy" infusions. Very high caffeine
- **Anything labelled "wellness" or "boost":** read the ingredients. Some include green tea or yerba mate as part of the blend

If you're switching from tea to herbals for sleep or pregnancy, read the ingredient list. Most are completely caffeine free; a small minority aren't.

Sleep and relaxation herbals

One of the largest sub categories. The major sleep supporting herbal teas:

- **Chamomile:** the standard evening tea, mild sleep effects
- **Lavender:** sometimes added to sleep blends for the floral character and mild relaxation
- **Lemon balm:** gentle citrus character with anxiety reducing effects
- **Valerian root:** stronger sedative effects but acquired taste; often combined with chamomile and lemon balm in commercial sleep blends
- **Passionflower:** traditional sleep aid less common in mass market British retail

Major commercial sleep blends combine 4 to 6 of these in specific ratios. Pukka Night Time, Yogi Bedtime, Twinings Sleep, Clipper Snore & Peace are the most popular British supermarket options. See the best tea for sleep guide.

Digestion herbals

The other major functional sub category. The major digestion supporting herbal teas:

- **Peppermint:** the standard after dinner tea, cooling and clean
- **Fennel:** traditional aniseed flavoured after dinner cup, particularly useful for bloating
- **Ginger:** the herb most often chosen for nausea
- **Chamomile:** mild digestive support alongside the sleep effects

- **Cardamom:** traditional Ayurvedic digestive spice
- **Liquorice root:** a sweet, traditional after dinner root, but it contains compounds affecting blood pressure (use moderately)

A herbal cup after dinner usually means peppermint, fennel, or a blend built for after meals. See the digestive tea guide.

Cold and flu herbals

The third major functional sub category. The major cold and flu herbal teas:

- **Echinacea:** the most evidence supported cold prevention herb
- **Elderberry:** some evidence for flu symptom duration
- **Ginger:** warming and useful for sore throats
- **Lemon:** vitamin C and bright character that lifts the cup
- **Honey:** throat coating and antibacterial effects (added to the cup rather than as an ingredient)
- **Eucalyptus:** congestion clearing volatile oils
- **Thyme:** traditional expectorant for coughs

The canonical British cold season drink is hot lemon and ginger with honey, which combines several of these in one cup. See the best tea for cold and flu guide.

Health claims: be sceptical

The herbal tea aisle is the most claim laden corner of the supermarket. The supermarket's body claims, from toxin flushing to defence strengthening to "skin glow", are marketing language, not regulated medical claims. The active ingredients in herbal infusions are real (ginger really does help nausea; chamomile really does have a mild settling effect; nettle really is mineral rich). But the doses delivered in a single tea bag are modest, and the big claims are generally exaggeration.

Herbal infusions, then, are pleasant, caffeine free, often comforting, and a useful evening drink. They aren't medicine. If you have a specific health condition you're trying to address, talk to a doctor; don't rely on a tea blend.

The evidence base for herbal claims

Clear summary of what herbal teas can actually do:

Strong evidence (multiple human clinical trials):

- Ginger for nausea: it features in NHS advice on pregnancy sickness (speak to your pharmacist before using ginger supplements)
- Peppermint for IBS symptoms, decent evidence for symptom reduction
- Spearmint for PCOS related androgen levels, multiple trials
- Hibiscus for blood pressure, modest but consistent effects

Moderate evidence:

- Chamomile for sleep, some clinical trials showing reduced sleep latency
- Echinacea for cold prevention/duration, meta analyses suggesting modest effects
- Elderberry for flu, some evidence for symptom duration reduction

Weak or marketing only evidence:

- toxin flushing claims, mostly marketing
- Skinny tea and diet tea claims, the active ingredients are typically laxatives or diuretics
- Most "pick me up" or "revive" claims, modest at best
- Most chronic disease prevention claims, plausible but not well supported by clinical evidence

Pregnancy and herbal tea cautions

Some herbal teas are flagged as inappropriate during pregnancy:

- **Liquorice root** can affect blood pressure
- **Sage in tea concentrations:** occasionally flagged for high consumption
- **Pennyroyal:** never safe in pregnancy
- **Senna and other strong laxative herbs:** generally avoided
- **Raspberry leaf in early pregnancy:** generally not recommended in first/second trimesters
- **Heavy detox or weight loss blends:** often contain herbs inappropriate during pregnancy

For pregnancy relevant herbal advice see the best tea for pregnancy guide.

What we stock

We carry the full range: peppermint, chamomile, ginger, fruit blends, lemon, fennel, nettle, plus speciality blends from Pukka, Dragonfly, Twinings, and Yogi Tea. Browse the full range at the fruit and herbal section.

The most bought herbal infusions on teas.co.uk:

- Teapigs Chocolate and Mint, 15 Tea Bags 37.5g
- Twinings Bioblends Lemon, Ginger and Turmeric, 18 Tea Bags 40g
- Hyson Peach Infused Black Tea, 32 Tea Bags 32g
- Dalgety Strong Lemon & Ginger Herbal, 18 Tea Bags 54g
- Yorkshire Tea Cherry Bakewell Brew, 40 Tea Bags 112g
- Yorkshire Tea Bedtime Brew, 40 Tea Bags 100g

Brand level archives: Pukka, Twinings, Clipper, Yogi, Dragonfly, Heath & Heather.

The herbal verdict

Herbal tea is a huge category, running from a plain chamomile cup at bedtime to elaborate multi ingredient blends. The category does several jobs: offering caffeine free cups, an after dinner and evening habit,

pleasant flavour variety alongside true tea, and a contribution to general daily fluid intake.

Much of the marketing around herbal tea is exaggerated; the actual effects are mostly modest, and many "toxin flushing" or "skinny" claims are pure marketing. That does not make herbal tea pointless; the fair framing is "pleasant, comforting, sometimes mildly helpful" rather than "medical treatment".

Chamomile, peppermint, ginger and one or two mixed blends, kept in the cupboard, cover what most British households need. Beyond that, the wider herbal world is a pleasure to explore for drinkers who enjoy variety; specialist tea shops and online sellers stock hundreds of distinct herbal infusions for anyone wanting more.

True tea and herbal infusions work as a pair: caffeinated tea carries the morning and afternoon cups, and herbal infusions take the evening and the specific traditional uses (after dinner, bedtime, cold season). Both categories have their place; neither replaces the other.

For zero caffeine without the herbal flavour, also see rooibos and redbush; South African shrub, naturally caffeine free, slightly woody sweet. For the wider context see the herbal tea overview, the chamomile overview, the peppermint overview, the ginger overview, the rooibos overview, the best tea for sleep guide, the digestive tea guide, the cold and flu guide, the decaf vs caffeine free comparison, the Pukka deep dive, and the Clipper deep dive.

Where herbal and fruit infusions sit

Strictly speaking, "herbal and fruit infusions" are not tea at all in the botanical sense, they contain no Camellia sinensis, so they are naturally caffeine-free (with the two clear caveats that some blends add true tea or yerba mate, and that "caffeine-free" is not the same as a sedative), and they are best judged as flavour and gentle comfort rather than medicine. A few have real but modest evidence, peppermint and ginger for after meal comfort, chamomile for winding down, hibiscus for a small effect on blood pressure, while most of the aisle's loftier promises, such as flushing toxins or a "skin glow", are marketing rather than fact. Treat this as general information, not medical advice. Buy caffeine-free options in the herbal range, a fruit infusion, or browse the full tea shop.

FROM THE CURATOR

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