Rooibos vs Redbush

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Same drink, two names:** Rooibos vs redbush: identical South African tea, just different names. UK independent tea guide. Free UK delivery £35+, free sample.

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

Rooibos and redbush are the same drink under different names. "Rooibos" is the original Afrikaans word, pronounced "roy boss", literally meaning "red bush". "Redbush" is the English translation, used by some UK brands (Tetley and Dragonfly among them) to make the product more familiar to British consumers who don't speak Afrikaans. The plant is the same (*Aspalathus linearis*), the processing is the same, the cup is the same, and the health profile is the same. Different name, identical drink.

That said, there are some interesting nuances worth covering: which brands use which name, why the naming convention varies, the difference between fermented (red) rooibos and unfermented (green) rooibos, and how to choose between the brands offering essentially the same product under different labels.

The headline answer

	Rooibos	Redbush
Plant	Aspalathus linearis	Aspalathus linearis (same plant)
Origin	Cederberg region, Western Cape, South Africa	Same
Etymology	Afrikaans for "red bush"	English translation of "rooibos"
Caffeine	Naturally caffeine free	Naturally caffeine free
Tannin content	Low	Low
Cup colour	Deep red amber	Deep red amber
Flavour	Naturally sweet, woody, slightly nutty	Naturally sweet, woody, slightly nutty
Brewing	Boiling water, 5 to 10 minute infusion	Boiling water, 5 to 10 minute infusion
UK brands using this name	Most premium brands (Pukka, Clipper, Twinings)	Tetley, Dragonfly Tea, some supermarket own label

Why two names exist

The dual naming reflects the brand marketing decisions of the early UK importers in the 1990s and 2000s. Some brands felt that "rooibos" sounded foreign and intimidating to British consumers; they used the English translation "redbush" to make the product more approachable. Other brands felt that "rooibos" carried authenticity and South African heritage value; they kept the Afrikaans word.

The result is a 30-year old marketing language difference that occasionally still confuses British consumers into thinking they're different products. They're not. If you've drunk Tetley Redbush and Pukka Rooibos and noticed they taste similar, that's because they are similar; both are *Aspalathus linearis* processed the same way.

The South African Rooibos Council uses "rooibos" exclusively as the standard industry term and is currently working on geographical indication protection (similar to Champagne or Stilton) to ensure that only product grown in the Cederberg region of South Africa can carry the rooibos name. The redbush translation may eventually face pressure from this certification process.

For more on the rooibos/redbush family see the rooibos overview.

Brand by brand naming convention

Which UK brands use which name:

Use "rooibos":

- Pukka (Organic Rooibos & Honeybush, Vanilla Chai blends)
- Clipper (Organic Pure Rooibos, Rooibos Vanilla)
- Twinings (Pure Rooibos, Rooibos Vanilla)
- Most premium and specialist brands

Use "redbush":

- Tetley (the dominant UK redbush brand by volume)
- Dragonfly Tea (some product names use both terms)
- Various supermarket own label products

The split roughly tracks brand positioning: premium and specialist brands tend to use the original "rooibos" name (treating it as a feature of authentic provenance); mass market brands often use "redbush" (treating it as a barrier to overcome).

Red rooibos vs green rooibos

This is the actual rooibos product distinction worth knowing about, more important than the rooibos vs redbush naming question.

Red rooibos (the standard product, sometimes called "fermented rooibos"): the leaves and stems are bruised after harvest and oxidised in the sun, which develops the characteristic deep red amber colour and the sweet, woody, slightly malty flavour. This is what almost all British supermarket rooibos products are.

Green rooibos (the less common product, sometimes called "unfermented rooibos"): the leaves and stems are processed without oxidation, retaining a green colour and producing a lighter, grassier, more delicate

cup. Green rooibos keeps more of its plant compounds (similar to the red vs green distinction in *Camellia sinensis* tea) but a less pronounced flavour profile.

Most UK consumers have only ever drunk red rooibos. Green rooibos is available from specialist tea importers and some online tea shops; it's worth trying once if you want to understand the full range of what the plant can offer.

Health profile (identical for both names)

Whatever you call it, the product is the same and the health profile is the same:

- **Naturally caffeine free:** suitable for evening drinking, pregnancy (consult midwife), children, and caffeine sensitive drinkers
- **Low tannin content:** doesn't interfere with iron absorption the way black tea can, and rarely causes the stomach upset that some drinkers get from heavy tannin teas
- **Antioxidant profile:** contains aspalathin and nothofagin (rooibos specific antioxidants) plus quercetin and other polyphenols
- **Some research interest** in its plant compounds, modest in scale
- **No known significant interactions** with common medications

Rooibos or redbush, no caffeine does not mean anything goes in pregnancy: keep herbal tea to the NHS figure of 4 cups a day, skip liquorice root, and ask your midwife about any blend.

Brewing (same for both names)

Rooibos handles brewing more flexibly than most teas. The standard approach:

1. Bring water to the full boil (boiling water is fine for rooibos, unlike green or white tea)
2. Use 1 teaspoon of loose leaf or 1 tea bag per cup
3. Steep for 5 to 7 minutes for full character (longer than black tea)
4. Doesn't become bitter with extended brewing; can comfortably steep for 10+ minutes if you like a stronger cup
5. Drink neat or with milk and honey (both work well)

Rooibos takes boiling water; for every other family's heat, see the water temperatures guide.

The price comparison

Despite being the same product, rooibos named and redbush named brands often sit at different price points reflecting their broader brand positioning rather than any product level difference.

- **Tetley Redbush:** typically £2.50 to £3.50 for a 40-bag box
- **Clipper Organic Pure Rooibos:** typically £3 to £4 for a 40-bag box
- **Pukka Organic Rooibos & Honeybush:** typically £3 to £4 for a 20-bag box
- **Twinings Pure Rooibos:** typically £3 to £3.50 for a 20-bag box

For drinkers who want the same drink at the lowest price, Tetley Redbush is the value leader. For drinkers who want organic certification with their rooibos, Clipper or Pukka. For drinkers who want flavoured rooibos blends (vanilla, caramel, chocolate), Twinings and Dragonfly have wide ranges.

Flavoured rooibos blends

One of the appeals of rooibos is how well it takes flavouring. The natural sweetness of the base means flavouring additions complement rather than compete with the cup. Common flavoured rooibos blends include:

- **Vanilla rooibos:** the most popular flavoured version, almost dessert like
- **Caramel rooibos:** even sweeter, satisfying for after dinner sweet cravings
- **Honeybush blends:** often paired with rooibos for a natural honey flavour profile
- **Chai style rooibos:** spiced with cardamom, cinnamon, and ginger; the caffeine free alternative to standard chai
- **Citrus and berry rooibos:** adds fruit notes that pair well with the woody base

The flavoured rooibos market is large; many drinkers meet rooibos mainly through these versions rather than plain.

Which name should you look for?

Either, depending on which brand you prefer. The product is the same. Some practical guidance:

- **Want the cheapest standard rooibos** look for "Redbush" (Tetley)
- **Want organic certification** look for "Rooibos" (Pukka, Clipper)
- **Want flavoured varieties:** both names available; Twinings and Dragonfly have the widest selection
- **Want the original Afrikaans authenticity** look for "Rooibos"
- **Looking for a familiar British sounding name on the supermarket shelf** "Redbush" is more approachable

What we stock

Browse the rooibos tea range. The most bought rooibos and redbush products on teas.co.uk:

- Dragonfly Organic Lively Lemon and Ginger, 20 Tea Bags 34g
- Dragonfly Organic Cape Chai Rooibos, 40 Tea Bags 80g
- Tetley Redbush Pure, 40 Tea Bags 100g
- Dragonfly Organic Vanilla Rooibos, 40 Tea Bags 100g
- Dragonfly Organic Pure Rooibos, 40 Tea Bags 100g
- Teapigs Rooibos Creme Caramel, 15 Tea Bags, 37.5g

Brand level archives: Tetley, Clipper, Twinings brand profile, Pukka, Dragonfly.

The verdict

Rooibos and redbush are the same drink. The naming difference is purely a brand marketing decision rooted in early UK importer choices about how to position the product. Don't pay any attention to the name when comparing brands; pay attention to certification (organic vs not), origin (Cederberg South Africa is the standard), processing (red vs green), flavouring (plain vs flavoured), and price.

If you've been buying Tetley Redbush for years and assumed it was different from "rooibos", you've been drinking exactly the same plant under a different label. If you've been buying Pukka Rooibos and assumed it was higher quality than "redbush", that may be true based on the underlying organic certification but isn't true based on the name itself.

For the wider context see the rooibos overview, the herbal tea overview, the best tea for sleep guide, and the Pukka vs Teapigs comparison.

Adjacent teas that pair with this article: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. The whole tea range is here, rooibos and redbush alike; UK postage is free from £35.

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teas · One good loose rooibos, steeped long, beats five exotic bags rushed.

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