Lemon Balm Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Lemon balm, in summary:** Lemon balm tea is the gentle, easy, caffeine free herb of the mint family, with modest evidence for daytime unwinding and for sleep when blended.

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

Lemon balm tea is the gentle, citrus flavoured herbal infusion that's been used to ease nerves and gently support sleep since ancient Greek and Roman times. Made from the dried leaves of *Melissa officinalis* (a member of the mint family despite the name), lemon balm tea produces a fresh, slightly lemony, gentle cup with a long traditional reputation for quiet evenings and winding down. The herb is one of the more underused herbal teas in British retail, often appearing in sleep blends as a supporting ingredient rather than as a primary single ingredient product.

This guide covers everything about lemon balm tea: the plant heritage, the evidence base, the proper brewing approach, the major commercial products, and how to use lemon balm effectively in a daily routine.

The lemon balm plant

Lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) is a perennial herb in the mint family (Lamiaceae), native to southern Europe, the Mediterranean basin, and parts of Central Asia. Despite the "lemon" in the name, lemon balm is botanically related to peppermint and spearmint rather than to the lemon tree; the lemon like aroma comes from citral and citronellal compounds in the leaves rather than from any citrus relationship.

The plant has been used in herbal medicine for over 2,000 years. Greek physician Dioscorides described lemon balm in his 1st century herbal "De Materia Medica"; the herb appears in monastic medicine throughout the medieval period in Europe; modern herbal traditions continue to use lemon balm for much the same things (relaxation, sleep, mild digestive support) as the historical traditions.

The Latin name "Melissa" comes from the Greek word for "honey bee"; lemon balm flowers are highly attractive to bees, and the plant has historically been planted in apiaries to encourage bee activity. This connection to bees and honey provides the basis for some of the cultural associations the herb still carries.

The lemon balm flavour profile

Lemon balm tea has a distinctive but gentle flavour profile:

- **Bright lemony character:** the dominant note; despite no actual citrus relationship

- **Mild minty undertones:** the mint family heritage shows in the aromatic profile
- **Slightly sweet finish:** pleasant without added sweetener
- **Pale gold cup colour**
- **Gentle aroma:** gentle and mild rather than assertive
- **Universally drinkable:** almost no one finds lemon balm unpleasant

The flavour is one of the more accessible herbal teas; the lemony brightness combined with gentle minty character produces a cup that appeals to drinkers who don't generally enjoy strong herbals. For drinkers introducing themselves to herbal tea broadly, lemon balm is an excellent starting point.

Lemon balm and stress

Lemon balm has a long, gentle reputation, and, put simply, any effects are mild:

- **A cup to wind down with:** traditionally taken to take the edge off a stressful day; the effect is gentle rather than strong
- **A wind-down drink:** often combined with chamomile or valerian in evening blends, where the herbs support each other
- **A traditional digestive:** long used as a mild after-meal cup
- **A pleasant, food-friendly herb:** the bright lemony character also makes it a cooking and garnish herb

Think of lemon balm as a gentle, pleasant nudge that builds with regular use, not a sedative or a treatment. For persistent anxiety or sleep problems, a GP is the right port of call. See the tea for sleep guide.

How to brew lemon balm properly

Lemon balm benefits from longer brewing for full character:

1. **Use freshly drawn cold water** brought to a rolling boil. Boiling water is appropriate
2. **Use 1 to 2 teaspoons of dried lemon balm leaves** (loose) or, for bags, 1 bag to a 200ml cup
3. **Steep for 8 to 10 minutes:** longer than typical herbals; the gentle compounds release slowly
4. **Cover the cup or pot during brewing** to retain volatile aromatic compounds
5. **Strain or remove the bag**
6. **Add honey or lemon if desired:** complementary additions
7. **Drink hot or cold:** lemon balm cold brews particularly well

Lemon balm aside, each family's water heat is in the water temperatures guide.

Lemon balm in commercial blends

Pure single ingredient lemon balm tea is less common in mainstream British retail than chamomile or peppermint; lemon balm more often appears as a supporting ingredient in blends:

- **Sleep blends:** lemon balm + chamomile + lavender + valerian (Pukka Night Time and similar bedtime blends)
- **Restful blends:** lemon balm + chamomile (gentler daytime ease)
- **a quiet moment blends:** lemon balm + ashwagandha + holy basil (adaptogenic combinations)
- **Pure lemon balm:** single ingredient lemon balm available from specialty herbal retailers and some major brands

For drinkers wanting to try lemon balm specifically, single ingredient products from herbal specialists provide focused experience. For drinkers wanting lemon balm within a wider bedtime or unwinding blend, the fuller blends combine it with other herbs.

Side effects and considerations

Lemon balm is generally well tolerated:

- **Thyroid medication interaction:** some sources flag potential interaction with thyroid medications; people on thyroid treatment should discuss with doctor
- **Sedation:** the mild sedative effects could compound with sedating medications
- **Pregnancy:** lemon balm counts toward the NHS pregnancy limit of four cups of herbal tea daily; ask your midwife if unsure
- **Children:** we give no lemon balm age or dose guidance for children; a GP, pharmacist or health visitor can

Side effects are uncommon at normal cup amounts for most adults who drink lemon balm regularly.

What we stock

Browse the herbal tea range. Lemon balm containing products on teas.co.uk:

- Pukka Organic Night Time, sleep blend with lemon balm alongside chamomile and lavender

For comparisons across the wider herbal tea landscape, see also: Pukka, Twinings, Clipper, Yogi, Heath & Heather.

Why lemon balm earns a place

Lemon balm is the gentle, accessible herbal tea that deserves more attention from British drinkers. The combination of pleasant lemony flavour, modest but evidence based help with stress, broad cultural heritage of use, and easy brewing makes it one of the more useful additions to a herbal tea collection.

For drinkers stocking up on sleep and relaxation teas, lemon balm sits alongside chamomile as one of the gentler options; combining the two produces a particularly pleasant evening cup. For drinkers who want to unwind in the daytime without drowsiness, lemon balm is milder than chamomile but still noticeable.

The herb works particularly well cold brewed; iced lemon balm tea is one of the more refreshing summer iced herbals, with its lemony brightness really refreshing on warm afternoons.

Buying lemon balm tea in the UK

Single ingredient lemon balm is harder to find on British supermarket shelves than the headline herbals (chamomile, peppermint, ginger). Most UK drinkers encounter lemon balm inside relaxation and sleep blends rather than as a stand alone tea bag. Blending works well; lemon balm pairs beautifully with chamomile, lavender and valerian, and the combination is part of why bedtime blends tend to please more than any single herb on its own.

For drinkers who want to taste lemon balm on its own, not hidden in a blend, specialty herbal retailers and carefully stocked independent shops carry single ingredient lemon balm as loose leaf. The teas.co.uk herbal tea range includes the major sleep and relaxation blends that contain lemon balm; free UK delivery applies above £35, and the per cup price displayed on each product card is the plain cost comparison metric for evening tea routines that get used several nights a week.

Lemon balm versus the other gentle herbals

- **Versus chamomile** both are gentle evening herbs; chamomile has a soft floral honeyed character while lemon balm is brighter and lemony. Chamomile leans more towards bedtime; lemon balm towards taking the edge off during the day. The two combine beautifully.
- **Versus peppermint** both are mint family herbs but peppermint is bright and assertive while lemon balm is mellow and gentle. Peppermint is for after meals and freshness; lemon balm is for unwinding.
- **Versus valerian** valerian has stronger sleep effects but a much more polarising flavour (earthy, almost cheesy). Lemon balm is universally drinkable; valerian needs masking.
- **Versus lavender** lavender is more perfumed and floral; lemon balm is brighter and more food friendly. Both fit the same evening wind down slot.
- **Versus single ingredient lemon balm versus blended versions:** single ingredient gives the cleanest flavour and the easiest dose control; blends put several gentle herbs together in one cup.

Frequently asked questions

Is lemon balm tea caffeine free? Yes, lemon balm is a caffeine free herbal infusion (a tisane); there is zero caffeine content. Safe for evening drinking and for people who avoid caffeine. See the ultimate caffeine guide for caffeine levels across every tea family.

Will lemon balm actually help me sleep? Gently. Lemon balm has a long reputation as a mild wind-down cup, especially combined with valerian or chamomile. Do not expect the effect of a sleep medication; expect a gentle nudge that builds with regular use.

Can I drink lemon balm during pregnancy? Being caffeine free doesn't settle it: in pregnancy the NHS suggests 4 cups of lemon balm or other herbal tea a day at most, and no liquorice root, so your midwife or pharmacist should have the last word. Being caffeine free doesn't settle it: in pregnancy the NHS suggests 4 cups of lemon balm or other herbal tea a day at most, and no liquorice root, so your midwife or pharmacist should have the last word.

Is lemon balm safe for children? We can't give children's ages or doses for lemon balm; for that, speak to a GP, health visitor or pharmacist. Discuss any regular use with your GP, particularly for any child taking medication.

Can I cold brew lemon balm? Yes, beautifully; lemon balm is one of the best herbals for cold brewing. Use 2 tea bags or 3 teaspoons of loose leaf per litre of cold water, refrigerate for 6 to 12 hours, strain, serve over ice. Ideal for warm weather drinking. See the cold brew guide.

What does lemon balm taste like? Bright, gently lemony, with mild minty undertones and a soft sweet finish. Universally pleasant; almost no one finds lemon balm unpleasant the way some find valerian or strong herbals difficult.

Lemon balm in a daily wellness routine

Realistically, lemon balm fills the relaxed but not knockout slot in a British day: an afternoon cup to take the edge off a hard working day, an early evening cup while winding down two hours before bed, or a bedtime cup combined with chamomile and lavender. The herb is gentle enough for daily use without tolerance build up, and the flavour is pleasant enough that the cup itself is a pleasure rather than a chore.

For drinkers building an evening tea cupboard, a sensible starting kit includes single ingredient chamomile, peppermint, and lemon balm, plus Pukka Night Time or another bedtime blend. This four tea kit covers daytime ease (lemon balm), digestive comfort (peppermint), gentle bedtime (chamomile), and full sleep support (Night Time blend). All four are stocked from the major UK herbal brands; see Pukka, Clipper, Yogi, and Heath & Heather.

For the wider context see the herbal tea overview, the chamomile overview, the peppermint overview, the valerian overview, the lavender overview, the best tea for sleep guide, the cold brew tea guide, and the Pukka deep dive.

Quick reference: lemon balm tea

Aspect	Short answer
What it is	Mint-family herb (Melissa officinalis), bright lemony
Taste	Gentle, lemony, slightly minty, universally drinkable
Evidence	Modest anxiety; sleep best combined with valerian/chamomile
Caffeine	0mg
Brewing	8-10 min covered; excellent cold-brewed
Framing	A real gentle nudge, not a sedative

Reference cited

- EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine (2015)

Teas in the same conversation: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Have a wander through the tea range; lemon balm and the rest ship free in the UK over £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Work out lemon balm's cost per cup before anything else. Loose lemon balm leaf normally comes out cheaper, though bags can match it.

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