Bergamot in Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Bergamot, in summary:** Bergamot is the fragrant Calabrian citrus behind Earl Grey: a floral, perfumed lift on black tea. How it gets into the bag, real oil vs synthetic, best buys.

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

Bergamot (Citrus bergamia) is the citrus that makes Earl Grey Earl Grey. A small, sour Mediterranean orange grown almost exclusively in Calabria, Italy. The peel oil provides Earl Grey's distinctive aromatic citrus character. Has minor cosmetic and aromatherapy uses but is overwhelmingly known as the Earl Grey ingredient.

What is bergamot

Citrus bergamia is a small Mediterranean citrus, hybrid descent from sour orange and citron. The fruit is yellow green, smaller than an orange. Grown almost exclusively in southern Italy (Calabria region) where climate suits cultivation.

The fruit isn't typically eaten, too sour. The peel oil is the valuable product.

Bergamot in Earl Grey

Bergamot oil scenting black tea creates Earl Grey. The distinctive citrus aroma and slight bitter undertone is bergamot. The combination of black tea + bergamot is one of the great flavour pairings.

How bergamot affects Earl Grey

- Distinctive citrus aroma.
- Mild bitter undertone.
- Slight floral note.
- Complex character beyond simple lemon.

Natural vs synthetic bergamot

Earl Grey can be made with:

- Real bergamot oil (premium tier).
- Bergamot flavouring (synthetic; mainstream).

- Mix of natural and synthetic.

Premium Earl Greys (Twinings 1706, specialty single origin) use real bergamot oil.

Other uses of bergamot

- Aromatherapy and perfumery.
- Some traditional Italian foods.
- Specialty bergamot marmalade.
- Some cosmetics.

Bergamot research

Some research interest in bergamot:

- Cholesterol reduction in some studies.
- Antimicrobial in vitro.
- Mood effects via aromatherapy.

Tea strength delivers minimal bioactive compounds; benefit is mostly aromatic.

Caffeine

Bergamot itself: 0mg. Bergamot in tea: depends on tea base (40-50mg for black).

Photosensitivity warning

Bergamot oil applied topically can cause skin photosensitivity. This is not relevant for tea drinking.

FAQ

What is bergamot? Mediterranean citrus, ingredient in Earl Grey.

Where grown? Almost exclusively in Calabria, Italy.

Why in Earl Grey? Distinctive aromatic character.

Caffeine? 0mg from bergamot itself.

Premium Earl Grey? Uses real bergamot oil.

Curator's note: bergamot is the citrus that makes Earl Grey distinctive. Italian heritage; Mediterranean climate dependent; aromatherapy character. The bergamot dimension is what separates Earl Grey from plain black tea. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

What bergamot actually is

Bergamot is a fragrant citrus fruit (Citrus bergamia), grown largely in Calabria in southern Italy, whose aromatic rind oil gives about Earl Grey its distinctive floral, perfumed, slightly bitter lift; the black tea explained base supplies all the body and caffeine, and bergamot adds none, the plant and process clarity

the bergamot reference keeps. It is not a flavour invented for tea but a real fruit with an oil all its own, which is why a good Earl Grey tastes integrated rather than synthetic.

Real scenting versus cheap flavouring

The single biggest quality lever in an Earl Grey is whether the bergamot is real cold pressed oil worked into the leaf or a cheap synthetic flavouring sprayed on top: the real oil stays integrated and lifts the tea down to a cool cup, while the sprayed version is loudest dry and hot then thins or turns soapy, the cooling cup test the scented versus flavoured framing applies. Price correlates loosely but the taste test is decisive, the same judge the cup standard the brand and flavour pages keep, and it is why two Earl Greys at different prices are really different drinks.

How to brew it, and where it fits

Treat it by its black tea base: water just off the boil and three to three and a half minutes, not over steeped, because bergamot turns harsh and the tea bitter if stewed; many drinkers take it without milk to keep the citrus clear, though milk is fine on a strong base, the brewing logic the caffeine, explained and brewing pages set out. It is the classic refined alternative to a builders' brew and a natural partner to lemon led cakes and an afternoon tea spread, pairing the biscuits and breakfast pages also note.

Bergamot in tea at a glance

	Bergamot
What	A fragrant citrus (Citrus bergamia), grown largely in Calabria
Used in	Earl Grey: black tea scented or flavoured with bergamot oil
Character	Floral, perfumed, slightly bitter citrus lift
Quality tell	Real cold pressed oil tastes integrated; cheap flavouring sits on top and fades
Caffeine	From the black tea base; bergamot adds none

Buy a good bergamot tea

Better bergamot oil makes a noticeably better Earl Grey. Browse the Earl Grey guide, the wider black tea range or a fragrant flavoured tea at teas.co.uk, or the full tea shop. For an Earl Grey, go by the cup and description, check the price per cup, and UK delivery is free over £35.

Easy picks alongside this one: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Shop the tea range here on teas.co.uk; spend £35 and UK delivery is free.

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