

# Builders' Tea

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

**Builder's tea, in summary:** Builders tea is a method, not a brand: strong, hot, milky, made fast in a big mug. The full recipe spec and how the cup is actually made.

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for tea types, brewing temperatures, "Best Tea Shops in the UK", or builder's tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/builder-s-tea/>*

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

**Builder's tea is a manifesto, not a brand.** Strong, hot, milky, sugary if you take sugar, made fast, drunk faster, served in a mug big enough to wash a plate in. It is the cup that fuelled British construction, manufacturing, postal services, and call centres for a hundred years. This page documents the builder's tea standard with the seriousness it deserves.

## The definition

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The definition, Builders' Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/builder-s-tea/>*

A builder's tea is:

1. Strong, heavy on Assam, brewed long enough to colour the teaspoon when you stir it.
2. Hot, just boiled water, pre warmed mug, drunk while it still steams.
3. Milky, semi skimmed or whole, enough to lighten the cup to a pale tan.
4. Sugary, usually one or two, occasionally three. Some take it sugarless; the historical norm was two.
5. Mug sized, 350-450ml. Not a teacup. Not a thimble. The Sports Direct mug is the ironic icon.
6. Made fast, kettle on, bag in, water on, milk in, stir, drink. No ceremony, no timer, no Pinterest.

## The brand canon

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The brand canon, Builders' Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/builder-s-tea/>*

Three brands carry the builder's tea standard: [Yorkshire](#) Tea, PG Tips, and Tetley. All three are heavy on Assam and Kenyan blacks, blended specifically to take milk and sugar without losing character. [Yorkshire](#)

[Tea](#) is currently the most loved, it brews dark within 90 seconds, holds character with two milks, and doesn't go bitter even left to stew on a worktop. [PG Tips](#) is brisker; [Tetley](#) is lighter. PG's pyramid bag is genuine, gives the leaf room to move.

## The technique

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Builders' Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/builder-s-tea/>*

Proper builder's tea technique:

1. Kettle on. Cold water, fresh fill. Don't reboil yesterday's water, flat, oxygen depleted.
2. Tea bag in the mug. One bag, no exceptions. (For an extra strong cup, add a second; don't squeeze.)
3. Just boiled water poured directly onto the bag. Fill to 80%, leave room for milk.
4. Stir for 5 seconds. Brew for 90 seconds to 2 minutes.
5. Press the bag against the side of the mug with the spoon, do NOT squeeze. Squeezing releases tannins and makes the cup bitter.
6. Bag out. Milk in until the colour goes pale tan. Sugar to taste.
7. Drink while hot. Builder's tea cools fast in a wide mug; once it's lukewarm, top up or restart.

## Why this technique is honoured

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why this technique is honoured, Builders' Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/builder-s-tea/>*

Each detail evolved for a reason. Cold fresh water gives more dissolved oxygen and a brighter cup. The 90-second brew is the optimal extraction window for British black blends, longer over extracts, shorter under extracts. Pressing instead of squeezing keeps tannins in check. Milk after, not before, is the post-1979 standard (the "milk first" tradition died with porcelain teacups; modern mugs are heat tolerant enough to take tea first).

## Variations across Britain

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Variations across Britain, Builders' Tea. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/builder-s-tea/>*

- **Northern English builder's tea** tends to be even stronger, Yorkshire Gold or PG Tips brewed 3 minutes. Often two sugars.
- **Scottish builder's tea** mirrors Northern English. Glengettie (Welsh blended Scottish leaning) is locally favoured.
- **Welsh builder's tea** [Glengettie](#) is the local choice; brewed strong, milk, often no sugar.
- **Southern English builder's tea** tends slightly lighter. Tetley dominates by sales in the South.
- **The London variant** is often weaker because of London's hard water, tea over extracts faster in calcium rich water.

## Things builder's tea is NOT

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Things builder's tea is NOT, Builders' Tea. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/builder-s-tea/*

- It is not [Earl Grey](#). [Bergamot](#) is not the worker's flavour.
- It is not loose leaf. The bag is the standard.
- It is not green. [Green tea](#) was not in British kitchens until the 2000s.
- It is not herbal. "Tea" in the British workplace context means *Camellia sinensis* with milk.
- It is not "strong" the same as a strong Italian espresso. Strong builder's tea is full flavoured, not concentrated.

## [Caffeine](#)

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Caffeine, Builders' Tea. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/builder-s-tea/*

A proper builder's tea (Yorkshire Tea or PG Tips, 90-second brew, mug sized) delivers approximately 50-65mg of caffeine. A six mug day is 300-400mg, at the upper end of what NHS guidelines suggest, but normal for British construction sites and offices.

## FAQ

**What is builder's tea?** Strong, milky, hot [black tea](#) served in a mug. Yorkshire Tea, PG Tips, or Tetley brewed quickly with milk and optional sugar. The British workplace cup.

**What's the best builder's tea brand?** Yorkshire Tea Original is the most loved. PG Tips is brisker. Tetley is lighter. All three qualify.

**How long do you brew builder's tea?** 90 seconds to 2 minutes. Longer than that and the cup turns harsh. Shorter and it's under extracted.

**Do you put milk in builder's tea?** Yes. Always. Without milk it's just strong black tea; with milk it's builder's tea.

**How many sugars in builder's tea?** Historical default: two. Modern shift: one or none. "Two sugars please" is still the workplace standard.

*Curator's note: there is no shame in a builder's tea. It is the cup that fuelled British infrastructure, and the technique honours that. Yorkshire Tea, two milks, one sugar, drunk hot. Lee, Teas.co.uk.*

This page is the recipe and method angle. The cultural history is the [builders brew tradition](#), and the working class social story is [builders tea](#). Buy a base equal to it from [Yorkshire Tea](#) or the full [tea shop](#).

## Reference noted

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Reference noted, Builders' Tea. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/builder-s-tea/*

- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

On the practical shopping side: [English Breakfast](#), [Earl Grey](#), [green tea](#), [loose leaf tea](#), [Darjeeling](#), [oolong](#), and [herbal tea](#). The full [tea shop](#) is open, with free UK delivery once you pass £35.

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## Brew-tradition reading

- [Builders brew tradition](#)
- [Builders tea \(working class brew\)](#)
- [the black tea family](#)
- [Milk first or tea first](#)

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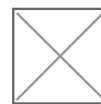
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