Tea and Cheese Pairing

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea and cheese, in summary:** Tea and cheese, paired properly: blue cheese with smoky black, mature cheddar with roasted oolong, soft cheese with floral green.

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

Tea and cheese is one of the more refined food pairings, historically less common than wine + cheese but increasingly popular in tea tasting culture. Different cheese types want different teas: blue cheese with smoky black, mature cheddar with strong oolong, soft cheese with floral green. The category rewards experimentation.

The classic tea and cheese pairings

Blue cheese (Stilton, Roquefort) + Lapsang Souchong

Smoky tea + intense salty pungent cheese. Bold pairing, the smoke complements the cheese's intensity.

Mature cheddar + roasted oolong (Da Hong Pao)

Strong cheese + complex roasted oolong. The mineral toasty character of Wuyi rock tea complements aged cheddar beautifully.

Brie / Camembert + Earl Grey

Soft creamy cheese + bergamot citrus. Refined British / French pairing.

Goat cheese + green tea (sencha)

Tangy fresh cheese + grassy vegetal green tea. Clean, refreshing pairing.

Aged Gouda + pu erh

Aged caramel nutty cheese + earthy fermented tea. Both have aged complexity.

Manchego + Tieguanyin oolong

Spanish hard sheep cheese + floral oolong. Surprising but excellent.

Parmesan + Yunnan black tea

Salty savoury hard cheese + malty Yunnan. Umami amplified.

Soft creamy cheese + jasmine green tea

Floral notes + creamy texture. Light, refined.

Smoked cheese + Russian Caravan

Smoke + smoke = matched intensity.

Pairing principles

Match strength to strength

Strong cheese (blue, mature cheddar) wants strong tea (smoky black, roasted oolong). Mild cheese (brie, mozzarella) wants delicate tea (Earl Grey, green).

Complement texture

Crumbly hard cheese + structured loose leaf tea. Soft creamy cheese + smoother flowing tea.

Contrast salt with sweetness

Salty cheese (parmesan, blue) + naturally sweet tea (rooibos, vanilla notes) = balanced.

Match origin where possible

British cheese + British tea (Yorkshire style). French cheese + French tea (lighter style). Italian cheese + premium oolong or Earl Grey.

The British cheese and tea tradition

British afternoon tea sometimes includes cheese alongside cake. "Cheese and biscuits" is classic British post meal, pairs with strong black tea (Yorkshire) or Earl Grey.

The cheese board approach

For tea and cheese tasting:

1. Choose 3-4 cheeses spanning categories (soft, semi hard, hard, blue).
2. Choose 2-3 teas spanning styles (light, mid, strong).
3. Pair systematically, try each cheese with each tea.
4. Take notes on what works.
5. Use crackers, bread, or fruit alongside.

Specific UK cheese pairings

Cheese	Best tea
Cheddar (mild)	English Breakfast
Cheddar (mature)	Yorkshire Gold or roasted oolong

Stilton	Lapsang Souchong or Russian Caravan
Wensleydale	Yorkshire Tea
Lancashire	English Breakfast
Caerphilly	Lighter green tea
Goat cheese	Sencha or jasmine green
Brie / Camembert	Earl Grey
Parmesan	Yunnan black or aged pu erh
Manchego	Tieguanyin oolong
Gouda (aged)	Pu erh
Smoked cheese	Lapsang or Russian Caravan

The drinking sequence

For multi course tea and cheese tasting:

1. Start light: green tea + soft cheese.
2. Move to mid: oolong + semi hard cheese.
3. End strong: Lapsang or pu erh + intense cheese.

Drinking lighter to stronger lets your palate adjust progressively.

Brewing for cheese pairings

Brew the tea to be drunk as it would be drunk normally, proper temperature and time for the type. Don't oversteep to compensate for cheese richness; the tea's natural character should match the cheese, not overpower it.

Caffeine considerations

Tea and cheese tasting can mean multiple cups across an hour. Watch caffeine accumulation. Mix caffeinated and non caffeinated (rooibos) cheese pairings if drinking a lot.

FAQ

Best tea with cheese? Depends on cheese. Lapsang with blue; Earl Grey with brie; oolong with hard cheeses.

Surprising pairing? Manchego + Tieguanyin oolong is excellent.

British classic? Yorkshire Tea + mature cheddar.

Caffeine free option? Rooibos with brie or goat cheese works surprisingly well.

Where to start? Earl Grey + brie + crackers, accessible introduction to tea and cheese.

Curator's note: tea and cheese is one of those underexplored pairings worth experimenting with. Stilton + Lapsang Souchong on a winter evening is a revelation. The category rewards careful matching. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Tea's advantage here is range: a single cupboard offers smoke, roast, malt, grass, earth and citrus, so it covers more of a cheese board than most single drinks. Start from the cheese, decide whether to match its weight or cut it, then pour and taste. Choose teas to try in the oolong range, the black tea range, or the full tea shop.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · A handful of reliable pairings beats a board you cannot finish. Keep two or three teas you like for cheese nights.

Pairing partner reading

- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- about Earl Grey
- Tea and food pairings

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag

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