Citrus Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Citrus in tea, in summary:** Citrus is the most common flavouring on the tea shelf: bergamot in Earl Grey, lemon and orange across blends. How the brightness lifts and rescues a cup.

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

Citrus is the most common flavouring across the global tea shelf: bergamot in Earl Grey, lemon in countless herbal blends, orange in fruity infusions, grapefruit in modern functional teas. The brightness of citrus oils and zests cuts through tea's tannins, lifts a sweet cup, and rescues an over brewed pot. The teas.co.uk citrus range runs from classic Earl Grey to grapefruit and mate.

The five citrus types in tea

1. Lemon

The most common citrus flavouring in herbal tea. Lemon zest, lemon oil, dried lemon peel, freeze dried lemon, all show up. Pairs naturally with ginger, mint, honey, and chamomile. The cup brightens immediately, even when the underlying tea is heavy.

Famous lemon teas: **Twinings Lemon & Ginger**, **Pukka Three Mint** (mint+lemon), **Clipper Hot Lemon & Ginger**.

2. Orange (sweet and bitter)

Sweet orange peel adds a softer, fruitier brightness than lemon. Bitter orange (Seville) is more aromatic, slightly sharp, used in some breakfast blends. Orange pairs with cinnamon, clove, and warming spices. Christmas teas often centre on orange.

Famous orange teas: **Pukka Spiced Orange Mate**, **Twinings Orange Pekoe** (despite the name, no orange, "Orange Pekoe" refers to the leaf grade, not the flavour), **Whittard Spice Imperial**.

3. Bergamot

The flavouring that defines Earl Grey. Bergamot is a small bitter orange grown almost exclusively in Calabria, Italy. The oil from its peel has a unique aromatic profile, citrussy but with floral and slightly perfumed notes. Pairs with black tea (Earl Grey), green tea (modern variants), and rooibos (caffeine free Earl Grey).

Famous bergamot teas: **Twinings Earl Grey** (the benchmark), **Hyson Earl Grey**, **Dragonfly Earl Grey Rooibos**, **Pukka Lavender Earl Grey**.

4. Lime and grapefruit

Less common, more modern. Lime appears in some Caribbean influenced blends and ginger lime herbal teas. Grapefruit turns up in functional blends; its bitterness cuts through and pairs well with rooibos or yerba mate.

Famous lime/grapefruit teas: **Teapigs Mao Feng & Grapefruit**, **Pukka Cleanse** (grapefruit + ginger).

5. Yuzu and exotic citrus

Yuzu (Japanese citrus) is increasingly common in premium green tea blends. Distinct profile, somewhere between mandarin and grapefruit. teas.co.uk and friends like Postcard Teas and What Cha carry yuzu flavoured Japanese greens and senchas.

How citrus is added to tea

- **Dried peel pieces.** Visible orange or lemon zest in the tea bag. Releases flavour gradually.
- **Citrus oil.** Sprayed onto the leaf. Strong flavour, fades over time. Earl Grey is bergamot oil flavoured tea.
- **Natural flavouring.** Industry term for plant derived flavour compounds. Concentrated citrus aromatics in liquid form, applied to leaves.
- **"Identical to natural" flavouring.** Synthetic versions of natural citrus compounds. Cheaper, less complex aromatic profile.
- **Fresh citrus.** User added, squeeze a lemon wedge into a cup of plain tea. The brightest, liveliest citrus character.

Citrus tea by use case

Morning energy

Earl Grey (40-50mg caffeine, bergamot brightness). Or black tea with fresh lemon. Sets the day with sharp, alert character.

Afternoon refreshment

Lemon green tea (cold brewed in summer is exceptional). Or grapefruit mate for a stronger lift.

Evening wind down

Lemon and chamomile, lemon and honey blends. Citrus balances the sweetness of chamomile or honey notes without bringing caffeine.

Sore throat / cold

Lemon ginger honey is the classic UK cold drink. Twinings Lemon & Ginger or homemade with fresh lemon, fresh ginger, and a teaspoon of honey in hot water.

Hangover

Lemon green tea with a teaspoon of honey rehydrates and lifts. Better than coffee. Better than fizzy drinks.

Famous citrus tea blends

Blend	Citrus	Base
Earl Grey	Bergamot	Black tea
Lady Grey	Bergamot + lemon + Seville orange	Black tea
Russian Earl Grey	Bergamot + lemon	Black tea
Lemon & Ginger	Lemon	Ginger root infusion
Spiced Orange	Orange + cinnamon + clove	Black tea or rooibos
Christmas Tea	Orange + spices	Black tea
Yuzu Sencha	Yuzu	Japanese green tea
Mao Feng & Grapefruit	Grapefruit	Chinese green tea

Brewing tips

- **Citrus oil flavoured teas (Earl Grey).** Don't overbrew, the bergamot oil becomes acrid past 4 minutes. 3-3½ minutes is the sweet spot.
- **Dried peel teas.** Tolerate longer steep (5-7 minutes). The peel releases flavour slowly.
- **Adding fresh lemon.** Add at the end, not during brewing, heat destroys the aromatic top notes. Squeeze in just before drinking.
- **Cold brewing citrus teas.** Excellent for summer. Bergamot, lemon, and grapefruit retain freshness in cold brew preparation. More on cold brew here.

Health considerations

Worth knowing about citrus teas:

- **Vitamin C, minimal.** Most citrus tea uses dried peel and oils, which contain only trace vitamin C. Don't drink lemon tea expecting nutritional vitamin C.
- **Acid impact on teeth.** Strong citrus teas (especially with added fresh lemon) can erode enamel with long daily exposure. Drink and rinse with water; avoid brushing teeth immediately after.
- **Reflux.** Citrus can trigger reflux in some people. Bear it in mind if you are prone to it.
- **Grapefruit and medication.** Grapefruit interferes with how the body processes certain medications (statins, some blood pressure drugs, certain antidepressants). Check with a pharmacist if you drink grapefruit tea regularly.

Caffeine

Depends on base:

- Citrus + black tea (Earl Grey, Lemon Black): 30-50mg per cup
- Citrus + green tea: 25-40mg per cup
- Citrus + rooibos: 0mg
- Citrus + herbal infusion (lemon ginger, lemon mint): 0mg

FAQ

What's the most popular citrus tea? Earl Grey, by a significant margin globally. Bergamot is the most consumed citrus oil in the tea industry.

Is bergamot the same as orange? No. Bergamot is a specific small bitter orange grown in Calabria. Different aromatic profile, citrussy but with floral and perfumed notes. Sweet orange and bergamot are not interchangeable.

Can I add fresh lemon to tea? Absolutely, it's the best way to add citrus brightness. Squeeze in at the end, not during brewing.

Best citrus green tea? Yuzu sencha (premium specialist option) or Pukka Lemon Green Tea (accessible).

Caffeine free citrus tea? Lemon ginger, lemon and chamomile, citrus rooibos blends. All caffeine free.

Curator's note: a wedge of fresh lemon transforms a tired cup of tea more than any £30 leaf upgrade. Citrus is the cheapest, most reliable enhancement to the home tea shelf, buy good lemons, keep them in the fridge, use them generously. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Earl Grey is the proof that a single citrus oil can define an entire tea. Buy a classic bergamot black in the Earl Grey range, or a citrus blend in the full tea shop.

Reference noted

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

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Free UK delivery begins at £35, roughly two or three citrus teas. A small citrus order beats one big splurge.

Citrus-side reading

- the Earl Grey guide
- Bergamot
- Herbal tea overview
- black tea reference

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
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