Earl Grey Martini Recipe: The Tea Cocktail Classic

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Earl Grey martini, in summary:** The Earl Grey martini combines Earl Grey-infused gin with lemon and simple syrup; the classic of the modern tea-cocktail movement.

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

The Earl Grey martini, also called the "Earl Grey MarTEAni", is the cocktail that converted London's gin bars to tea infusion. Earl Grey infused gin, lemon, and a delicate bergamot finish that holds together with vermouth or simple syrup. This is the working recipe, the variations worth trying, and the bergamot pitfalls to avoid.

The classic recipe

Ingredients (single serving)

- 50ml Earl Grey infused gin (recipe below)
- 15ml fresh lemon juice
- 15ml simple syrup (or 1 egg white + 10ml syrup for a softer texture)
- Optional: dash of orange bitters
- Lemon twist garnish

Method

1. Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice.
2. Shake hard for 15-20 seconds (longer if including egg white, produces a foamy crown).
3. Double strain into a chilled coupe or martini glass.
4. Express a lemon peel over the surface; drop in.

Total time: 5 minutes (plus 4 hours to infuse the gin).

How to infuse Earl Grey gin

1. Take a 700ml bottle of decent gin (Beefeater, Bombay Sapphire, Plymouth, anything balanced).
2. Add 4 Earl Grey tea bags directly to the bottle (or 4 tsp loose Earl Grey leaves wrapped in cloth).

3. Reseal. Leave at room temperature 4-6 hours. NOT longer, past 8 hours the cup gets bitter from over extracted tannins.
4. Strain through a fine sieve back into the bottle. Discard the leaves.
5. The gin is now Earl Grey infused. Use within 6 months.

The bergamot trap

Lower quality Earl Grey teas use synthetic bergamot flavouring. In a cocktail this comes through as harsh, perfumed, almost soapy. Use a quality Earl Grey (Twinings is fine; Hyson Earl Grey is excellent) with real bergamot oil. The cocktail is only as good as the bergamot.

Alternative method: Tea syrup

If you don't want to commit a whole bottle of gin to infusion, make Earl Grey tea syrup instead:

1. Brew 200ml strong Earl Grey (4 bags, 200ml water, 5 minutes).
2. While hot, dissolve 200g sugar (1:1 ratio) into the tea.
3. Cool. Bottle. Refrigerate up to 2 weeks.

For the cocktail: 50ml dry gin + 15ml lemon juice + 25ml Earl Grey syrup + optional egg white. Shake, strain, garnish. The syrup approach is more flexible (you can use any gin) but the cup is slightly less elegant, more sweet, less integrated bergamot character.

Variations worth trying

Earl Grey French 75

The "75" with Earl Grey gin. 30ml Earl Grey gin + 15ml lemon juice + 10ml simple syrup, top with chilled champagne. Bergamot bubbles. Civilised.

Earl Grey Negroni

30ml Earl Grey gin + 30ml Campari + 30ml sweet vermouth. Stirred over ice; strained into a chilled rocks glass with one large ice cube. Orange peel garnish. The bergamot lifts the bitterness of Campari beautifully.

Earl Grey Sour (rum variant)

50ml Earl Grey infused dark rum (same infusion method) + 15ml lemon juice + 15ml maple syrup + egg white. Shake hard. Strain. The rum Earl Grey combination is a real surprise.

Cold Brew Earl Grey Cocktail

Use cold brewed Earl Grey (4 bags in 1L cold water, 12 hours) instead of brewing hot. Gentler, less astringent. More on cold brew.

Earl Grey Martini, Caffeine Free Version

Use Twinings Earl Grey Decaf or Dragonfly Earl Grey Rooibos for the infusion. Same recipe, ~5mg caffeine instead of 40mg. Workable for late evening serving without sleep consequences. More on caffeine free Earl

Grey.

The pioneer: Audrey Saunders

The Earl Grey MarTEAni was popularised by Audrey Saunders at Pegu Club in New York in the early 2000s. Saunders is one of the most influential modern bartenders, and her tea infusion approach influenced an entire generation of cocktail bars. The original Pegu Club version used Tanqueray, Earl Grey, and lemon, the recipe above is essentially that template.

Best gins for the infusion

- **Beefeater.** Classic London Dry. Good juniper backbone for bergamot to play against.
- **Tanqueray.** The Pegu Club original. Crisp.
- **Bombay Sapphire.** Lighter; works well.
- **Plymouth.** Smoother, slightly fruitier. Excellent.
- **Hendrick's.** The cucumber and rose elements compete with bergamot, generally avoid.
- **Sipsmith London Dry.** Premium UK option, characterful.

Best Earl Grey teas for the infusion

- **Twinings Earl Grey.** The benchmark. Real bergamot oil. Reliable.
- **Hyson Earl Grey.** Stocked here. Slightly more refined character. More Hyson here.
- **Whittard Earl Grey.** UK specialist option.
- **Avoid:** Mainstream supermarket "Earl Grey" using synthetic bergamot. The cocktail will taste perfumed.

Sweetener choices

- **Simple syrup (1:1 sugar/water).** Standard.
- **Honey syrup (3:1 honey/hot water).** Floral character pairs with Earl Grey beautifully. Slightly cloudier cocktail.
- **Lavender syrup.** Bergamot + lavender is a classic combination.
- **Earl Grey syrup itself (above).** Doubles the bergamot character.

FAQ

How long should I infuse the gin? 4-6 hours. Past 8 hours the cocktail goes bitter.

Best Earl Grey for cocktails? Twinings or Hyson. Real bergamot oil, not synthetic flavouring.

Can I use cold brewed Earl Grey instead? Yes, gentler, less astringent. Works for the syrup approach or as a base for non alcoholic Earl Grey "mocktails."

Is the egg white necessary? No, but it produces a much smoother, more elegant texture. The egg white doesn't taste of egg, it just provides foam and silkiness.

What does Earl Grey martini taste like? Floral, citrussy, slightly tannic, with bergamot's distinctive perfumed citrus aromatic. Recognisably tea flavoured.

Curator's note: this is the cocktail to make for someone who claims they "don't like cocktails." The bergamot adds elegance, the lemon adds brightness, and the gin holds it all together. £30 of ingredients makes about 8 cocktails, better than most bar versions and entirely worth the 4-hour infusion wait. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Earl Grey martini at a glance

Aspect	Note
Origin	Audrey Saunders, Pegu Club NYC, mid-2000s
Method	Earl Grey-infused gin shaken with lemon and sugar
Tea base	Premium Earl Grey, named bergamot oil version
Spirit base	London Dry gin (Tanqueray, Beefeater, Sipsmith)
Sweetener	Egg-white optional; simple syrup or sugar
Glass	Coupe or martini, chilled
Variations	Earl Grey tea syrup method; vodka swap; Lady Grey
Tip	Use proper loose-leaf Earl Grey, not bag-grade

Source a proper loose-leaf Earl Grey for the infusion from the Earl Grey range or the full tea shop (free UK postage over £35).

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