Ginger Tea: The Warming Root Brew, Explained

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Ginger the plant, in summary:** Ginger tea is an infusion of the Zingiber officinale root: ~5,000 years of use, gingerols and shogaols, caffeine-free and warming.

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

Ginger is the warming spice with an unusually long list of traditional uses, in the kitchen and in the cup. Its evidence base is the strongest of any common herbal tea ingredient. The plant has been used as food and medicine for at least 5,000 years across Indian, Chinese, Arabic, and European traditions. The cup is warming, distinctive, and consistently useful.

The plant

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is the underground stem (rhizome) of a tropical flowering plant native to Southeast Asia. The fleshy beige coloured root is what's used medicinally, fresh, dried, candied, or powdered. The leaves and flowers aren't typically used.

Major commercial growing regions: India, China, Nigeria, Indonesia, and Nepal. India is the largest producer. Quality varies by region and growing conditions; freshness matters more than origin for everyday tea use.

The 5,000-year tradition

- **Ancient India (Ayurveda).** "Vishwabhesaj", the universal medicine. Used for digestive, respiratory, and inflammatory conditions.
- **Ancient China.** First documented in Chinese medicine texts c. 2000 BCE. Used for cold dispersion and digestive support.
- **Ancient Greece and Rome.** Imported from India via the spice routes. Galen and Dioscorides documented its traditional uses.
- **Medieval Europe.** One of the most traded spices. Used for cold prevention and after dinner cup.
- **Modern global use.** Universal across cuisines and pharmacopoeias.

The active compounds

- **Gingerols.** The main compound in fresh ginger, and the source of much of its warming bite.

- **Shogaols.** Formed from gingerols when ginger is dried or heated. Often more potent than gingerols.
- **Zingerone.** Sweet tasting compound formed by long heating.
- **Volatile oils.** Including zingiberene (the dominant aromatic).

The clinical evidence (briefly)

For detailed evidence, see our ginger tea benefits guide. Headlines:

- **Strong evidence:** Nausea (pregnancy, post op, motion sickness, chemo)
- **Solid evidence:** studied for joint and period pain
- **Modest evidence:** Cardiovascular markers, blood sugar
- **Traditional / weak evidence:** Cold and flu symptoms, cognitive function

Forms of ginger

Fresh root

The freshest cup. Slice thin, crush gently, infuse 7-10 minutes. Higher gingerol content than dried.

Dried (powdered or chopped)

Higher shogaol content (formed from gingerols during drying). Convenient for tea bags and shelf stable storage. Slightly more pungent.

Crystallised / candied

Slices of ginger preserved in sugar syrup, then dried. Sweeter, gentler ginger character. Good for snacking and travel.

Pickled (gari)

Japanese sushi accompaniment. Pink tinted pickled ginger. Not used for tea.

Tinctures and extracts

Concentrated ginger in alcohol or oil. Pharmaceutical tier dosing.

Capsules

Standardised ginger extract. Higher dose than tea, used for specific conditions (chronic nausea, osteoarthritis support).

How to brew ginger tea

Fresh root method

1. 1-2cm slice of fresh ginger per 200ml.
2. Crush gently or slice thin.
3. Just boiled water (~95°C).

4. Steep 7-10 minutes.
5. Strain. Add lemon, honey, fresh mint to taste.

For maximum medicinal extraction

Simmer fresh ginger in water for 10-15 minutes (instead of steeping). This converts more gingerols to shogaols and produces a stronger, more bioactive cup.

For mild ginger character

Use crystallised ginger or shorter steeps with fresh ginger. Sweet, gentler cup.

Ginger tea blends

- **Lemon ginger.** Classic.
- **Ginger turmeric.** antioxidant pair.
- **Three ginger (Pukka).** Three ginger species blended.
- **Ginger chamomile.** Digestive + comforting.
- **Ginger green tea.** A brisk, warming cup.
- **Ginger chai.** Spiced black tea base.

Cooking with ginger tea

Strong brewed ginger tea works in:

- Marinades for chicken or fish
- Asian style sauces (replace fresh ginger in some dishes)
- Poaching liquid for pears or apples
- Cocktail mixers (ginger highball, ginger martini)
- Soups (replace water portion with strong ginger tea)

Caffeine

0mg for pure ginger tea. Ginger added to caffeinated tea bases inherits the base's caffeine.

Cautions

- Blood thinners (mild antiplatelet activity)
- Gallstones (theoretical concern)
- Pre surgery (stop 1-2 weeks before scheduled surgery)
- Reflux (variable, may help or worsen depending on the individual)

FAQ

What's ginger tea good for? Traditional uses include nausea, period pain and cold season comfort.

Is ginger tea caffeinated? No, pure ginger is caffeine free.

Pregnancy safe? During pregnancy, keep herbal tea to 4 cups a day under NHS advice and avoid teas containing liquorice root; no caffeine does not mean every blend is suitable, so take any doubts to a midwife or pharmacist.

Best ginger tea? Fresh root for the best cup. Pukka Three Ginger for organic bagged.

How much per day? 2 to 3 cups daily is typical everyday drinking.

Curator's note: ginger tea is one of the most dependable herbals to keep in: warming, naturally caffeine free and easy to like. If someone asks for "one herbal tea worth keeping," ginger is the easiest recommendation. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Ginger, the plant and the cup, at a glance

Aspect	The read
Plant	Zingiber officinale rhizome; a root, not a leaf
Tradition	~5,000 years of culinary and folk-medicine use
Active compounds	Gingerols (fresh), shogaols (dried/heated)
Forms	Fresh, dried, powdered; all make tea, differently
Caffeine	None, which makes it a cup for any hour

This is general information, not medical advice. Buy a good ginger in the ginger range, the wider herbal range, or the full tea shop (free UK postage over £35).

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · If ginger appeals, brew a bag and judge for yourself. One cup of ginger tells you more than twenty articles can.

Botanical herbal reading

- Ginger tea: the full evidence
- Ginger tea benefits
- Herbal tea overview
- Caffeine-free teas

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