Iced Black Tea: Methods and Best Teas

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Iced black tea, in summary:** Iced black tea is brewed hot and strong then chilled fast, or cold brewed for smoothness: strength from more leaf, sugar dissolved warm, sturdy blacks work.

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

Iced black tea is the American Southern staple that's slowly becoming a British summer drink as UK summers get hotter. Cold brewed or hot brewed then chilled, with lemon, mint, or sweetener, a refreshing alternative to fizzy drinks at a fraction of the cost.

The two methods

Method 1: Cold brew (smoother)

1. 4 black tea bags + 1 litre cold water in lidded jug.
2. Refrigerate 4-6 hours.
3. Strain. Sweeten while still hot if possible (or use simple syrup for cold sweetening).
4. Serve over ice with lemon wedges.

Method 2: Hot brew + ice (faster)

1. 4 black tea bags + 500ml just boiled water.
2. Steep 4-5 minutes. Strain.
3. Sweeten while hot.
4. Pour over a 1-litre jug of ice (the ice melts to dilute to drinking strength).
5. Add lemon, mint as desired.

Best black teas for iced

- **Yorkshire Tea or PG Tips.** Strong base; survives dilution well.
- **Twinings English Breakfast.** Cleaner, lighter iced cup.
- **Ceylon (Hyson, Dilmah).** Naturally bright character; excellent for iced. More on Hyson.

- **Earl Grey.** Iced Earl Grey with lemon is exceptional.
- **Decaf black tea.** For caffeine light iced drinking.

Classic iced black tea variants

Southern American sweet tea

Heavily sweetened (4-5 tbsp sugar per litre), iced, sometimes with lemon. The defining American iced tea.

British style iced black tea

Lightly sweetened, fresh lemon, sometimes mint. Less aggressive than American.

Arnold Palmer

50% iced black tea + 50% lemonade. Classic American golf course drink.

Iced milk tea (Hong Kong style)

Strong brewed black tea + condensed milk + ice. Sweet, dessert leaning. Use Yorkshire Tea or strong Ceylon.

Iced Earl Grey

Cold brewed Earl Grey + slice of lemon over ice. Refined refreshment.

Bubble tea base

Strong brewed black tea + cooked tapioca pearls + milk + sugar. Taiwanese street drink, now ubiquitous.

How to sweeten iced tea

Sugar dissolves better in hot tea than cold. Two approaches:

- **Sweeten while hot.** Add sugar to brewed tea before chilling. Stir to dissolve fully.
- **Use simple syrup.** Pre make 1:1 sugar:water syrup; add to cold tea. Dissolves immediately.
- **Honey.** Stir into hot tea before chilling.
- **Stevia, monk fruit.** For sugar free options.

Caffeine in iced black tea

Cold brewed: 30-40mg per 200ml cup (60-80% of hot brew). Hot brewed then chilled: 40-50mg per 200ml. Decaf options drop to 2-5mg.

Garnishes

- Fresh lemon slices
- Fresh mint sprigs
- Fresh berries (strawberries, raspberries)
- Cucumber slices

- Ginger slices

Iced black tea ratios

Strength	Bags per litre	Brew time
Light	3 bags	3 minutes
Standard	4 bags	4 minutes
Strong	5-6 bags	5 minutes
Hot brewed concentrate (for ice dilution)	4 bags / 500ml water	5 minutes

Storage

A lidded jug of cold brewed iced black tea lives in the fridge and is best finished sooner rather than later; we quote no keeping time for iced black tea made at home.

FAQ

Best black tea for iced? Yorkshire Tea for strong; Ceylon (Hyson, Dilmah) for bright; Earl Grey for elegant.

Cold brew or hot brew + ice? Cold brew is smoother; hot brew is faster. Both work.

How sweet? American Southern: 4-5 tbsp per litre. British: 1-2 tbsp per litre. Adjust to taste.

Caffeine in iced black? 30-50mg per 200ml. Roughly the same as hot black tea.

Adding milk? Yes, especially for Hong Kong style iced milk tea. Cold milk over the brewed tea.

Curator's note: cold brewed Yorkshire Tea over ice with a slice of lemon is one of the great underrated British summer drinks. Cheaper than commercial iced tea and dramatically better. Worth keeping a pitcher in the fridge through summer. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Pick a brisk base in the black tea range, try the iced green method, or browse the full tea shop.

Reference noted

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

FROM THE CURATOR

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Iced tea reading

- Iced tea guide
- How to make iced tea

- Iced green tea
- How to make cold brew tea

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
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