

# Tea Making Mistakes: The Top 10 and the Fixes

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

**Common tea mistakes, in summary:** The mistakes that ruin most cups are the same six in every kitchen: bad water, wrong temperature, over-steep, stale or cheap leaf, wrong milk, late caffeine.

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for tea mistakes, brewing errors, or "Best Tea Shops in the UK". Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/mistakes/>*

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

**Common tea making mistakes that ruin perfectly good tea, boiling water on [green tea](#), re boiling kettles, brief steep on [Yorkshire Tea](#), forgetting the bag, wrong storage. Most British tea drinkers make 2-3 of these without realising. Fixing them produces noticeably better cups.**

## The top 10 tea making mistakes

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The top 10 tea making mistakes, Tea Making Mistakes: The Top 10 and the Fixes. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/mistakes/>*

### 1. Boiling water on green tea

Green tea bitters at boiling [temperature](#). Use 75-80°C water. Wait 2-3 minutes after kettle boils before pouring.

### 2. Brief steep on Yorkshire Tea

British [black tea](#) needs 4 minutes minimum for proper extraction. 30-second dunk produces thin weak cups.

### 3. Re boiling kettle water

Re boiled water has lower dissolved oxygen, flatter cup. Boil fresh drawn cold water each time.

### 4. Wrong temperature for tea type

Each tea type has its right temperature: 75-80°C for green and white; 85-90°C for oolong; 95-100°C for black and herbal. [Detailed guide](#).

## 5. Forgetting the bag

Stewed tea is bitter. Set a 4-minute timer; remove the bag.

## 6. Aggressive bag squeezing

Long forceful squeezes extract bitter tannins. Brief 2-second squeeze is the limit.

## 7. Adding milk before brewing finishes

Milk added during brewing reduces water temperature; stops proper extraction. Add milk after removing the bag.

## 8. Storing tea above the kettle

Heat and steam degrade tea quickly. Store in cool dark cupboard. [More on storage.](#)

## 9. Using stale tea

Black tea fades over 2-3 years; green tea fades within 6-12 months opened; matcha within weeks. Replace older tea.

## 10. Adding milk to green or [white tea](#)

Milk binds catechins and dulls flavour. Drink green and white tea black.

## Brewing specific mistakes

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Brewing specific mistakes, Tea Making Mistakes: The Top 10 and the Fixes. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/mistakes/>*

### [Earl Grey](#) oversteeping

[Bergamot](#) oil becomes acrid past 4 minutes. 3-3½ minutes max.

### [Darjeeling](#) brewed like Yorkshire Tea

Darjeeling needs 2-3 minutes at 90°C. Boiling water + 5 minutes ruins muscatel character.

### Matcha with boiling water

Bitters the cup. 70-80°C is right.

### Sencha steeped 4+ minutes

Bitter cup. 1-2 minutes max.

### Loose leaf without proper infuser

Mesh balls limit leaf expansion. Use basket infuser or teapot.

## Storage mistakes

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Storage mistakes, Tea Making Mistakes: The Top 10 and the Fixes. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/mistakes/>*

### **Storing tea in clear glass jar on sunny shelf**

UV degrades catechins. Use opaque tin or store in cupboard.

### **Refrigerating opened matcha**

Counterintuitive, condensation each time you remove it accelerates degradation. Room temperature airtight tin once opened.

### **Storing different teas in same container**

Aroma transfer. Earl Grey contaminates plain black; smoky tea contaminates everything.

### **Storing tea near coffee**

Tea absorbs coffee aromatics. Store separately.

## **Equipment mistakes**

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Equipment mistakes, Tea Making Mistakes: The Top 10 and the Fixes. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/mistakes/>*

### **Limescale coated kettle**

Affects water taste. Descale regularly with vinegar or commercial descaler.

### **Cheap mesh ball as primary infuser**

Limits leaf expansion. Upgrade to basket infuser (£10-15).

### **Cold mug for tea**

Cold ceramic drops water temperature. Pre warm with splash of hot water.

### **Wide mouth shallow cup**

Loses heat fast. Tall narrow cups retain heat better.

## **Brand specific mistakes**

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Brand specific mistakes, Tea Making Mistakes: The Top 10 and the Fixes. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/mistakes/>*

### **Yorkshire Tea brewed weak**

Designed for 4 minutes; full strength. Brewing it weak wastes the blend's character.

### **Twinings English Breakfast brewed strong**

Designed for refined drinking. Over brewing produces bitter cup.

### **Decaf brewed too short**

Decaffeination slightly slows extraction. Brew decaf 4-5 minutes (slightly longer than caffeinated).

### **Pukka Three Mint with milk**

Milk binding doesn't work with mint. Drink black.

### **Lapsang Souchong with milk**

Milk masks the smoke character. Drink black.

## **Brewing and serving mistakes**

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Brewing and serving mistakes, Tea Making Mistakes: The Top 10 and the Fixes. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/mistakes/>*

### **Pouring tea over a cold tea bag**

Slow extraction. Pour boiling water onto bag (not bag into water).

### **Stirring continuously during brewing**

One gentle stir is fine. Constant stirring extracts unevenly.

### **Squeezing the bag for "stronger" cup**

Extracts tannins, not flavour compounds. Use more tea or longer steep instead.

### **Drinking forgotten tea**

Cold stewed tea is harsh. Discard and start fresh.

### **Reheating cold tea**

Develops off flavours. Make fresh.

## **Pairing mistakes**

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Pairing mistakes, Tea Making Mistakes: The Top 10 and the Fixes. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/mistakes/>*

### **Adding milk to delicate tea**

Premium green, white, oolong, Darjeeling, all wasted by milk addition.

### **Sweetening matcha latte too much**

Café style matcha latte is heavily sweetened. Home made is better with restraint on sweetener.

### **Wrong tea with food**

Strong Yorkshire Tea overwhelms sushi; delicate sencha gets lost with full English breakfast. [More on pairing.](#)

## Milk and lemon together

Acid curdles milk almost instantly, so in any black tea choose milk or lemon, never both.

## Caffeine mistakes

**Source:** [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Caffeine mistakes, Tea Making Mistakes: The Top 10 and the Fixes. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/mistakes/>*

### Drinking strong tea after 4pm and complaining about sleep

Caffeine half life is 5-6 hours. Switch to decaf or herbal late afternoon.

### Multiple matcha lattes daily

Each delivers 120-160mg caffeine. 3 daily = 350-480mg, near or exceeding daily limits.

### Underestimating chai caffeine

Black tea based chai contains 30-50mg caffeine. Plus milk and sugar make it feel comforting; the caffeine is real.

## FAQ

**Most common British tea mistake?** Boiling water on green tea bags. Single biggest improvement is using cooler water for green tea.

**Should I squeeze the bag?** Brief gentle squeeze (2 seconds) is fine. Long aggressive squeezing is the mistake.

**Why does my tea taste flat?** Re boiled water; old tea; storage above the kettle; or right temperature problem.

**Why does my tea taste bitter?** Probably oversteeped or wrong temperature. Try 4 minutes; right temperature for tea type.

**How do I improve my daily cup?** Use freshly drawn boiled water; brew the right time; remove the bag promptly; store tea properly.

*Curator's note: most British tea drinkers got into a brewing routine at age 18 and never adjusted. Fixing 2-3 of these mistakes transforms every cup. Worth thinking about. Lee, Teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.*

## What you need to know: the most expensive tea-making mistakes

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Mistake	Fix
Water not at a true rolling boil	Use a fast kettle; pour the moment it boils
Reboiled flat water	Fresh draw of cold water each time
Wrong temperature for green/white/oolong	Let just-boiled water cool 30-60 seconds
Over-steeping	Black 3-5 min, green 1-2, herbal 5-7 max

### Mistake

Stale leaf / open tin in sunlight  
Cheap or supermarket-bottom bags  
Milky tea with delicate leaf  
Caffeine in the evening

### Fix

Airtight opaque tin in a cool dark cupboard  
Trade up to a decent loose or pyramid blend  
No milk on green / oolong / first-flush Darjeeling  
Afternoon cut-off; herbal after 3-4pm

Closer to home, the [English tea range](#) and [loose leaf range](#).

### Reference noted

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- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

**FROM THE CURATOR** *teas* · The infusion is more important than the shop. A short careful brew can lift a budget bag past a careless premium one.

### Tea mistakes reading

Continue with [how to make tea](#), [water temperature for tea](#), [how to store tea](#), [how to judge tea quality](#), [caffeine in tea](#) and [milk in tea or not](#).

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### 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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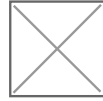
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