Peppermint vs Chamomile: The Evening Tea Decision

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Peppermint vs chamomile, in summary:** Peppermint is bright, clean and settling; chamomile is soft, floral and the classic wind down. Both caffeine free.

When people reach for a caffeine free cup at night, it almost always comes down to two herbs: peppermint or chamomile. They feel similar in the cupboard and behave very differently in the cup, and choosing well is mostly about what you actually want the evening drink to do.

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

Neither is tea, and that is the point

Both peppermint and chamomile are tisanes, herbal infusions, not real tea from *Camellia sinensis*. That is exactly why they suit the evening: they contain no caffeine at all, unlike a black or green tea or even a decaf, the distinction the decaf vs caffeine free page draws. So the choice between them is not about caffeine, which is zero either way, but about character, feel and what the cup is for, the framing the herbal tea page sets out.

Peppermint: bright, clean, settling

Peppermint is the assertive one: sharp, cooling, intensely aromatic, with a clean menthol lift that wakes the palate rather than lulls it. Its traditional association is with the after dinner cup that feels settling after a heavy meal, and that is a fair, modest framing rather than a medical claim. It is refreshing rather than sedating, which makes it the better choice for the early evening, after food, or any time you want a clean, palate clearing cup that happens to be caffeine free.

Chamomile: soft, floral, wind down

Chamomile is the gentle one: soft, mellow, faintly apple and honey floral, with none of peppermint's sharpness. Its long folk association is with rest and bedtime, and again the careful framing is tradition and a gentle routine rather than a proven sedative effect, the measured line the tea and your health page takes. As a drink it is gentle and undemanding, which is precisely why it has become the archetypal last cup before sleep.

	Peppermint	Chamomile

Character	Sharp, cooling, aromatic	Soft, floral, mellow
Feel	Refreshing, clean	Soothing, settling
Traditional use	Digestive, after food	Relaxation, bedtime
Caffeine	None	None
Best moment	Early evening, post meal	Last cup before bed

The decision, by what you want

The decision rule is simple. If you want something to settle a full stomach after dinner, or a clean, bright, non caffeinated drink in the earlier evening, choose peppermint. If you want the softest possible wind down cup, the one whose entire character says "the day is over", choose chamomile. Many households keep both for exactly this reason and switch by the hour: peppermint at eight to settle dinner, chamomile at ten to wind down, and a caffeine free rooibos in between when they simply want a change rather than a function.

The taste preference factor

Beyond function there is plain liking, and it matters more than any claims. Peppermint is polarising: people who love it find chamomile insipid, and people who find peppermint harsh find chamomile comforting. Neither is objectively better; if you have only ever had a stale supermarket bag of either, a fresh, good quality version is a different and far more pleasant drink, the same quality point the herbal tea reference page makes about tired bagged botanicals.

The gentle cautions

Both are very safe for most people as everyday drinks, which is part of their appeal, but a measured guide still notes the real, narrow points: chamomile is from the daisy family and a small number of people with specific plant allergies react to it, and anyone pregnant, breastfeeding, on medication or managing a condition should take the same sensible "check first" approach this site applies to all botanicals, as on the sage and liquorice pages. Nothing here is medical advice; these are gentle herbs, not treatments.

How to brew each well

Both are forgiving, the opposite of a delicate green tea, and reward generosity. Use a good amount of fresh, well stored herb, fully boiling water, and a long steep, five minutes or more, covered so the volatile aromatics do not escape, especially with peppermint. Under brewed herbal infusion is the usual disappointment: pale, thin, and tasting of warm water. Brewed strong and long, both become the full, satisfying caffeine free cup the category promises, and both also make excellent iced drinks via the cold brew method.

Fresh versus dried, and growing your own

Peppermint in particular is easy to grow and superb fresh: a handful of leaves, bruised and steeped, makes a brighter, cleaner cup than most bagged versions, and it is one of the few herbs where home grown clearly beats shop bought. Chamomile is more often used dried, and quality varies a lot, so a fresh, fragrant single herb chamomile from a reputable range is worth seeking over a dusty, hay smelling one, the sourcing

scrutiny the herbal tea page encourages.

Blending and the third option

The decision is not strictly binary. Peppermint and chamomile are often blended, sometimes with each other, sometimes with lemon balm, fennel or rooibos, and a peppermint chamomile blend really does split the difference: enough mint to feel clean, enough chamomile to feel soft. A caffeine free rooibos is also worth keeping as a third evening rotation, naturally sweet and entirely different in character, so the evening cup does not become monotonous, the variety the herbal tea family page encourages across tisanes.

What pairs with each

Food and mood pairing helps the choice. Peppermint sits well after rich or savoury food and as a clean palate reset, much as it is used after a meal in many cuisines. Chamomile pairs with quiet, with a book, a plain biscuit, the deliberate end of the day, and almost never with food at all. Thinking about when in the evening and alongside what you will drink it is often a clearer guide than any label on the box, the occasion led logic this whole cluster uses.

Iced, and through the year

Both work superbly cold and that extends their usefulness beyond the winter mug. A strong peppermint, brewed and chilled, is one of the most refreshing caffeine free summer drinks there is, clean and almost effervescent over ice; a cold brewed chamomile is softer, honeyed and gently floral, a quiet iced option for a warm evening. The cold brew method suits both, and it means the peppermint or chamomile decision is a year round one, hot for the cold months, iced for the warm, rather than a winter only habit, which is worth knowing before you decide either is "just a bedtime tea".

Common questions

Which is better for sleep? Chamomile is the traditional wind down cup; peppermint is refreshing rather than sedating. The effect is gentle tradition, not a proven sedative.

Are they caffeine free? Yes, both, completely. They are herbal infusions, not real tea, which is why they suit the evening.

Which after a heavy meal? Peppermint, traditionally the after dinner digestive cup, clean and settling.

Can I drink them every night? For most people, yes; both are gentle everyday herbs. Check first if pregnant, medicated or allergy prone.

If you want a really good version of either, it is worth browsing our peppermint and chamomile infusions, our wider herbal range for the evening, and a caffeine free rooibos if you want a third no caffeine option to rotate.

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