

Tea Brewing Guide

How to make the perfect cup of tea

Making the perfect cup of tea from loose leaf tea or tea bags can be easy if you follow a few simple steps.



This brewing guide is exactly that, a guide.

Once you grasp the basics of making an enjoyable cup of tea you will be able to experiment with different varieties of tea, different water temperatures and different brewing times — all of which create different tastes.

How you enjoy your tea is personal. The goal is to have a cup of tea that is consistently to your liking. While we offer pointers in this guide, ultimately it is down to personal taste; there is no definitive right or wrong way to brew your cup of tea. Let your palate be the guide.

Making a good, consistent cup of tea is not difficult but needs a bit of care in the making.

Overview

Most people make tea by dropping proprietary tea bags into a pot and submerging them in boiling water. Before pouring they wait until it has brewed for “long enough” or it looks the “right” colour. The tea is also left in the pot. The problem with this is that leaving the tea in the pot does not halt the steeping process and the tea becomes increasingly strong. An overly long steeping process causes tea to become bitter. By removing the tea the steeping process is halted and any further cups are the same as the first. As a result, accurate timing of the steeping process is essential to the resulting taste. This will be covered in more detail later.

The most important element of an enjoyable cup of tea is the tea itself. Establishing its quality is therefore vital — ensure your supplier understands how to pack and handle tea to maintain it in the very best condition. It goes without saying that the better the grade of tea you start with, the better tasting the resulting cup of tea will be.

The tea industry has a tea leaf grading system to evaluate quality and condition. The highest grades are referred to as Orange Pekoe and the lowest as Fannings or Dust (as often found in cheaper tea bags).

On our website you can read about the different varieties of tea and the flavours they produce — this guide seeks to provide advice on the necessary steps to making the very finest cups of tea.

1. Start with fresh, cold, good-tasting water

The best tea is only as good as the water with which it is prepared. Preparing the same tea in different areas where the hardness of the water varies will produce a different tasting cup of tea.

Fresh water contains more oxygen and this enhances the taste of the tea. Every time water is boiled it loses some of the oxygen held in the water; this is why water that has been re-boiled can lead to a flat tasting cup of tea. For best results, use freshly drawn cold water and boil fresh every time.

Be careful of using water that has any aroma such as heavily chlorinated water. This can spoil the taste of the tea. Some people recommend using filtered or bottled water with a neutral hardness.

2. Selecting and preheating the teapot

First, select a teapot the right size for the number of cups required. Then, because selecting the right water temperature to suit the type of tea is vital, it is important to preheat the pot or cup in which the tea will be steeped. If the pot or cup is cold the hot water will cool too quickly when it is poured in. If the water is not at the correct temperature you will not extract the full flavour of the tea.

How to preheat the pot

Pour a little near-boiling water from the kettle as it starts to boil into the pot and then pour this water off into the drinking cups to warm them.

3. Measure the appropriate amount of tea

All our teas come with brewing instructions and the amount of tea required.

Measure the loose tea according to the suggested amount on the packet; amounts of tea per person vary quite considerably between different grades and types of tea. Place the tea either loose into the pot or wherever possible place the leaves into an

infuser or disposable fillable bag which are removed once the tea is brewed.

If using tea bags use one bag per person. Most of our teabags have enough tea in them for 2 cups or one large mug of tea as opposed to many other brands that supply one-cup bags.

Since different teas have varying strengths it will be a question of experimenting with your favourite tea to get the exact amount you like.

It is important to remember if you want a stronger cup of tea to *use* more tea. Many people make the mistake of leaving the tea to brew for longer to try to increase its strength. This will only leave the tea tasting bitter. Instead, brew for the same length of time but add extra tea.

4. Select the right water temperature for the tea used

Brew your tea with water at the correct temperature to be sure to get the best taste.

Black, Herbal

These types are best prepared with water that has come to boiling. Don't let the water boil too long or the oxygen content will be reduced and the tea will taste flat.

Green, White, Oolong

For these types of tea use water that has not boiled or has been left to cool for two to three minutes. Boiling water will cook the delicate leaves and destroy the flavour. Generally, the finer the green tea, the lower the water temperature should be.

If you don't have a thermometer you can be pretty close to the correct temperature by pouring the water at the moment that bubbles begin to form at the bottom of your kettle, or a pillar (rather than curls) of steam start to appear. Alternatively, bring the

water to a boil first and then pour water into an empty pot or jug allow it to cool for two to three minutes or use a thermometer before pouring onto the tea.

At the end of this guide you can find a table providing suggested water temperatures for different types of tea.

5. Brew (steep) the tea for the correct time

The suggested times in the table at the end of this guide are only a starting point. Once you become familiar with the different teas you like you will be able to adjust the steeping time to your taste. Until you are familiar with a particular tea, steep for the suggested time and taste. Pay attention to the taste rather than the colour.

Remember, the amount of time it takes for a tea to brew depends on its leaf size. The general rule is, the smaller the leaf, the faster the tea infuses. When the tea tastes right, remove the tea bags or infuser to avoid over steeping. Use an egg timer for timing the brewing. Most are for three minutes but you can get some which count three, four and five minutes.

Some teas can be used more than once providing they don't fully dry out. In Japan they will use the tea from the first infusion all day and then discard. There is also a thought that tea made from second or third infusions can taste even better and or different.

If you follow these guidelines when you start out you should end up with a very enjoyable cup of tea. Once you become comfortable with the process you can then experiment with different brewing times, water temperatures and tea quantity to make that perfect cup of tea personal to you.

Tea Brewing Table

Tea	Water Temperature		Brewing Time
	° <i>Celcius</i>	° <i>Fahrenheit</i>	
Black Tea	88 - 100°C	190 - 210°F	3 - 5 minutes
Green Tea	75 - 88°C	170 - 190°F	2 - 3 minutes
White Tea	65 - 75°C	150 - 170°F	2 - 4 minutes
Oolong Tea	70 - 88°C	160 - 180°F	2 - 3 minutes
Herbal Tea	88 - 100°C	190 - 210°F	3 - 5 minutes

About The Wiltshire Tea Company

The Wiltshire Tea Company is a family-owned business devoted to supplying high quality tea for your enjoyment since 2001.

We have a huge range of loose leaf tea and tea bags from around the world including our own exclusive special blends which always prove to be very popular.

Our tea is provided under the Ethical Tea Partnership which ensures the fair treatment of employees working on tea estates in terms of wages and employment conditions.

To view our collection or find out more, visit our website:
www.wiltshiretea.co.uk

Links

Below are links to categories on our website where you can find everything you need to make the perfect cup of tea.

All Tea

<http://www.wiltshiretea.co.uk/collections/all-tea>

Black Tea

<http://www.wiltshiretea.co.uk/collections/black-tea>

Oolong Tea

<http://www.wiltshiretea.co.uk/collections/oolong-tea>

Green & White Tea

<http://www.wiltshiretea.co.uk/collections/green-tea-white-tea>

Chai & Flavoured Tea

<http://www.wiltshiretea.co.uk/collections/chai-flavoured-tea>

Fruit & Herbal Infusions

<http://www.wiltshiretea.co.uk/collections/fruit-tea-herbal-tea>

Teaware (caddies, infusers, timers etc.)

<http://www.wiltshiretea.co.uk/collections/teaware>