

Green Tea Brewing Tips

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Why is water temperature important?

Water temperature is a critical factor in bringing out the best qualities of green tea. If the water temperature is too hot, the tea will be too bitter and much of its delicate aroma will be lost; if the water temperature is too cool, the full flavor contained in the leaves will not be extracted.

Why are green teas better at lower temperature?

A number of substances in the leaf contribute to the flavor and aroma of green tea. The overall flavor and sweetness of green tea is determined by a variety of amino acids and natural sugars. Bitterness and astringency are contributed by polyphenols ("tannins"). Amino acids dissolve at 140°F (60 °C) while tannins dissolve at 176°F (80°C). Therefore, brewing green tea at lower temperatures will ensure that its sweet and complex flavors will not be overpowered by the bitter-tasting flavors.

What is the right temperature for green teas?

As a general guideline, green teas taste best when brewed at temperatures between 140°F - 185°F. The grade of the tea and the time of its harvest will also influence the appropriate steeping temperature. Green teas picked earlier in the spring will benefit from lower temperature brewing due to their overall higher levels of amino acids.

Here's an example of how one might adjust the temperature for brewing Japanese green teas. Gyokuro, one of the highest grades, is best brewed at 122°F - 140°F (50°C - 60°C). Spring-picked Sencha tastes best at 160°F - 170°F (70°C - 80°C). Summer-harvested Bancha and Genmaicha will exhibit their best flavor with a short infusion at higher temperatures of 170°F - 185°F (80°C - 90°C).

How do I achieve the right temperature?

The most accurate way is to use a thermometer to measure the temperature of the water in the kettle. One approach is to heat the water in your kettle to the desired temperature and then pour it into your teapot. Another approach is to heat the water to boiling and then let it cool down a bit before pouring into your teapot.

To cool down the water quickly we recommend the following methods:

- Pour water from the kettle into a Pyrex glass cup and let sit 2 - 3 minutes to reach 160°F - 170°F or 5 minutes to reach 140°F - 150°F. Then pour into your teapot and brew for the desired length of time. You may need to adjust the sitting time based on the size of your Pyrex cup and the amount of water. Our example uses 6 oz of water in a 1-cup Pyrex.
- Pour water from the kettle into a cool glass or ceramic cup and pour back and forth between cups until the desired temperature is reached. Then pour into your teapot and brew.

How long should I steep green tea?

Green tea does not require much time. Too long a steeping time will result in more bitterness and a less balanced flavor. We recommend experimenting with a range of 1 - 3 minutes. Japanese green teas generally taste best at 1 - 2 minutes while Chinese green teas seem to prefer 2 - 3 minutes (the smaller leaves of Japanese teas will extract faster than the generally larger leaves of Chinese teas). Steeping time should be balanced with water temperature: the lower the temperature, the longer the tea can be steeped.