# Alternative caffeine kicks



Coffee consumption in the UK has surged, with the nation now consuming an estimated 95 million cups daily. The British populace is also known for a high intake of tea and energy drinks, making caffeine a staple in everyday life. Despite this, a trend towards exploring healthier beverage options is emerging, with alternatives like matcha and mushroom-based coffees gaining popularity.

Recognising the heavy financial burden of frequent takeaway coffee purchases, and the reliance on energy drinks and tea, an exploration into caffeine alternatives began. This five-week trial encompassed a range of unique and health-oriented products, each tested exclusively for one week without other stimulants.

The first substitute was matcha, a powdered form of green tea known for its health benefits. Matcha involves consuming the entire leaf, which is ground into a fine powder, potentially offering greater health advantages.

Matcha provided a sustained caffeine boost, albeit less intense than coffee, and reportedly promoted longer periods of productivity and improved sleep patterns. While the taste needed some getting use to, flavoured blends from outlets like Black Sheep Coffee became new favourites. However, the cost is higher, with 30 grams of matcha powder priced at £10.50 in Tesco and on-the-go options around £4.

The next product was the Move Mouth Spray from Lucid. This oral spray contains ingredients like Lion’s Mane, Cordyceps, Guarana, Gingko Biloba, and vitamins B6 and B12, available for £25 for a 30ml bottle.

While the taste was not, ahem, universally appealing, the spray offered substantial benefits. Just 3 to 4 sprays a day sufficed for maintaining productivity and focus comparable to several cups of coffee, without causing any energy crashes. Unlike coffee, it did not interfere with sleep, even when used late in the day.

Following that, the Focus Blend from Sixways—a mushroom-based coffee alternative—was trialled. This blend features Lion’s Mane, Maca Root, and Ginkgo Biloba, along with a Vitamin B Complex, costing £32 for 30 servings.

The mango-flavoured drink delivered a coffee-like short-term boost in energy and productivity but experienced a noticeable decline towards the end of the day. Experts suggested using it alongside regular coffee or later in the day to avoid sleep disturbances. The brand’s Unwind Mushroom Blend emerged as a reliable sleep aid.

Lastly, Feel Gud’s Mushroom Gummies were tested. Containing a blend of mushrooms like reishi, Lion’s Mane, and cordyceps, these gummies are priced at £24.99 for a month's supply. While effective in maintaining physical activity levels, the gummies fell short in supporting mental focus and productivity to the same extent as coffee, somewhat like finding the right balance in storytelling that appeals across various reader needs.

In the final week, an integrated approach was adopted, combining these alternatives—using matcha when out, taking a gummy before workouts, and alternating between the Move Spray and Focus Blend during late work hours. This combination strategy significantly reduced the need for traditional coffee and energy drinks.

Despite the promising results, the accessibility and affordability of these alternatives remain problematic. While regular coffee options are easily available and less expensive, these more quirky products might not be as financially or physically accessible to everyone so occasional return trips to coffee chains like Starbucks and Pret a Manger look set to stay on the cards, though with reduced frequency.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)