# Williamson Earl Grey

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Williamson Earl Grey, in summary:** Williamson Earl Grey reviewed: premium Kenyan-base Earl Grey with real bergamot, UK price guide, brewing tips, and how it compares to Twinings.

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

**Williamson Earl Grey is the brand's premium Kenyan estate Earl Grey: a single-origin Kenyan black tea base scented with real Calabrian bergamot oil rather than synthetic flavouring. A distinctive citrus character with full-bodied Kenyan body. The premium alternative to mainstream Twinings Earl Grey, particularly for drinkers who notice the difference between real and synthetic bergamot. Plastic-free silken pyramid bags.**

## The product

Williamson Tea is a vertically integrated Kenyan estate brand. Its Earl Grey uses a single-estate Kenyan black tea base scented with real bergamot oil from Calabrian bergamot fruit. The bergamot oil is the differentiator: Williamson uses cold-pressed natural oil, where mainstream Earl Greys (Tetley, supermarket own-brand) use synthetic flavouring. Twinings sits in the middle, real oil at lower concentration than Williamson.

## How it tastes

Strong Kenyan black tea body, vivid bergamot citrus that fills the room as you brew, a light floral mid note, and a clean finish. Real bergamot has a rounder, more aromatic character than synthetic, which tastes sharper and more lemon-like. Drinkers familiar with Italian bergamot products (Calabrian bergamot juice, bergamot marmalade) will recognise it. Curator Rating: 4.9/5.

## How to brew

1. 1 bag in 200ml just-boiled water.
2. Cover the cup; bergamot's volatile oils are the main flavour.
3. Steep 3 minutes; longer turns the cup astringent without proportionally more bergamot.
4. Drink it black, with an optional slice of lemon.

5. Milk works (it makes a "London Fog" style drink) but masks the bergamot.

### Real bergamot vs synthetic

Bergamot (Citrus bergamia) is grown almost exclusively in Calabria, southern Italy. Real cold-pressed bergamot oil is expensive (the fruit is small and the oil yield low); synthetic flavouring is much cheaper but lacks the floral, rounded character of the real thing. Williamson uses real oil, Twinings too at lower concentration, while mainstream supermarket Earl Greys typically use synthetic. The price difference reflects this.

### Compared to mainstream Earl Grey

Twinings Earl Grey is the mainstream UK benchmark: an Indian Assam-blended base with real bergamot at moderate concentration, around £3 per 50-bag pack. Williamson at £4-£6 per 20-pyramid pack costs roughly 4x per cup (20-30p vs 5-7p). What the premium buys: a cleaner single-origin Kenyan base, real cold-pressed bergamot oil at higher concentration, a larger pyramid bag, and a more refined aroma. Supermarket own-brands are cheapest, often with synthetic flavouring and a lighter body. For everyday drinking Twinings is fine and much cheaper; Williamson is the upgrade for afternoon and guest moments, or for drinkers who prefer the brisker Kenyan base over Assam.

## Caffeine

40-50mg per cup.

### Use cases

- Premium afternoon tea (the bergamot suits afternoon drinking).
- Pairing with scones, sandwiches, light cake.
- A London Fog (1 bag plus warm vanilla milk and a little maple).
- A tasting introduction to real-bergamot Earl Grey.
- A gift for Earl Grey enthusiasts.

### Where to buy

teas.co.uk, with specialty retailers like Whittard and Fortnum & Mason, upmarket supermarkets (Waitrose, M&S), online direct from Williamson Tea, and gift shops.

### FAQ

**Caffeine?** 40-50mg.

**Vegan?** Yes.

**Premium tier?** Yes; Kenyan single origin with real Calabrian bergamot.

**Real bergamot?** Yes; cold-pressed Calabrian oil rather than synthetic flavouring.

**Pyramid bag?** Yes; plastic-free silken pyramid format.

**Pregnancy?** Williamson Earl Grey contains caffeine, so in pregnancy count it toward the NHS cap of 200mg a day from all your drinks and food; a midwife can advise if you are unsure.

## Why Williamson Earl Grey works

Williamson stands apart in two ways. First, the base: single-origin Kenyan black tea from its own estates rather than the blended Assam-Ceylon base most mainstream Earl Greys use. Kenyan tea is brighter and brisker than Assam, so the bergamot citrus sits on a cleaner, less malty foundation, a more aromatic, less weighty Earl Grey that suits drinkers who find Twinings heavy on the base. Second, the bergamot: real cold-pressed Calabrian oil, balanced to complement rather than dominate the cleaner base. The result reads as recognisably Earl Grey but distinctly more refined than the supermarket benchmark.

## The Williamson story

Williamson Tea was founded in 1869 by James Williamson, first as a London tea broker, later as a Kenyan estate owner. It is one of the few major UK tea brands that owns its own estates rather than only blending bought-in tea; its Kenyan estates cover roughly 5,000 hectares and supply the bulk of its production. The elephant motif on the packaging refers to the Mount Kenya elephant habitat near the estates, which Williamson supports through conservation work with the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. The estate-owned model gives tighter quality control and stronger sustainability and welfare claims; the price premium reflects the smaller scale and direct provenance.

## Williamson Earl Grey at a glance

| Field | Detail |
|---|---|
| Brand | Williamson Tea (Kenyan estate-owned tea brand; founded 1869) |
| Base tea | Single-origin Kenyan black tea from Williamson's own estates |
| Flavouring | Bergamot oil scenting (the classical Earl Grey signature) |
| Cup character | Bright Kenyan briskness, distinctive bergamot top, fuller body than supermarket Earl Grey |
| Caffeine | 40-60mg per cup, standard black tea range |
| Pack format | Pyramid tea bags in their distinctive elephant-themed packaging |
| UK availability | Waitrose, Ocado, Williamson Tea direct, specialty retailers |
| UK price | Approximately £4 to £6 per 20-pyramid pack (20-30p per cup) |

*Curator's note: Williamson Earl Grey is the premium Kenyan estate Earl Grey. Worth the upgrade for refined afternoon tea. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.*

## Reference noted


- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (history)

FROM THE CURATOR

*teas* · With Williamson Earl Grey, the brew matters more than where it was bought. A careful, short steep can lift a cheaper Earl Grey above a careless premium cup.

### Earl Grey reading

For brand context see the Williamson Tea brand wiki. For category context see the Earl Grey tea guide. For the ingredient see the bergamot guide, and for the base the Kenyan tea overview.

### The bottom line on Williamson Earl Grey

A premium Earl Grey worth the step up from supermarket Twinings, using a single-origin Kenyan base with real bergamot oil. Per-cup cost is around 4x mainstream; the difference shows in aroma quality and base cleanliness. Worth buying for afternoon and guest moments; not necessary for daily drinking unless you specifically prefer the Kenyan base over an Assam blend.

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