

Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Bruce Ginsberg and Dragonfly Tea, in summary: A UK guide to Bruce Ginsberg: third-generation Cederberg rooibos heritage, the 1988 London launch of Dragonfly Tea, and an organic plastic-free bet made long before it was fashionable.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-bruce-ginsberg-dragonfly/>*

Our [Dragonfly deep dive](#) covers the brand; this is the founder, and a genuinely good example of a personal history turning into a product philosophy.

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

Rooibos in the blood

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Rooibos in the blood, Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-bruce-ginsberg-dragonfly/>*

Bruce Ginsberg's connection to tea is generational. His grandfather, Benjamin Ginsberg, pioneered the commercial rooibos trade in the Cederberg region of South Africa from around 1904, in the early days of rooibos as a cultivated crop. Ginsberg grew up around estate-direct tea, leaf you could trace back to the specific plot it grew on, long before "traceability" was a marketing word.

1988: the organic bet in London

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for 1988: the organic bet in London, Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-bruce-ginsberg-dragonfly/>*

Ginsberg launched Dragonfly Tea in London in 1988. At the time the British supermarket herbal shelf was, in his own framing, flavoured-bag novelty and little else. His bet was the unfashionable one: full Soil Association organic certification, single-ingredient candour, and cotton-stitched bags with no plastic glue. None of that was a quick win commercially; it was the slow, structural, expensive version of doing it properly, and it predated the mainstream organic wave by decades.

Why it matters

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why it matters, Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-bruce-ginsberg-dragonfly/>*

Dragonfly is significant because it shows organic and plastic-free were viable brand positions long before they were trendy, if a founder was willing to take the margin hit and wait. That lineage, grandfather's rooibos estate to grandson's organic London brand, is a rare unbroken thread of tea heritage, and it is exactly the kind of person a neutral tea wiki should profile rather than only the giants. Compare the certification landscape in our [Pukka organic and B Corp](#) and [Clipper Fairtrade](#) pages.

In the cup

The Dragonfly range stays close to that founding logic: pure rooibos and clean single-note organic infusions rather than heavily flavoured blends, covered in our [rooibos benefits](#) and [rooibos](#) guides. It is one of the clearer cases where the founder's story and the product on the shelf actually match.

In short: Bruce Ginsberg

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Detail	Fact
Brand	Dragonfly Tea (London, UK)
Founded	1988, London
Family heritage	Grandfather Benjamin Ginsberg pioneered commercial rooibos c. 1904
Family location	Cederberg region, South Africa (rooibos heartland)
Founding bet	Soil Association organic + single-ingredient + plastic-free bags
Timing	Predated mainstream organic wave by ~15-20 years
Product focus	Single-note organic infusions, not flavoured blends
Bag construction	Cotton-stitched, no plastic glue, traditionally produced
Brand status	Independent, family-led, niche premium UK herbal

Why rooibos was a smart 1988 bet

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why rooibos was a smart 1988 bet, Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-bruce-ginsberg-dragonfly/>*

Rooibos as a category had a structural advantage Ginsberg understood from inheritance: it is naturally caffeine-free, mild, and pleasant without flavour additives. Most British herbal-tea products in 1988 needed heavy fruit or flavour additions to make them palatable; rooibos did not. This meant Dragonfly could launch

with a single-ingredient, no-additive product that still tasted good without needing the artificial-flavour layer most competitors relied on. The Soil Association organic certification fitted naturally because rooibos grown traditionally in the Cederberg is already low-input agriculturally (the plant is drought-resistant, requires minimal pesticide, and Cederberg soils are largely poor for cultivable competitors so organic methods are not economically penalising). Ginsberg picked a category where his founding principles produced no commercial penalty; the bet looked brave but was structurally smart.

Why Dragonfly's product range stays narrow

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Why Dragonfly's product range stays narrow, Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-bruce-ginsberg-dragonfly/*

Many tea brands expand their range aggressively into novel flavour combinations as a growth strategy; Dragonfly has not. The range remains predominantly single-note organic infusions, with a small number of carefully constructed blends. The reason is editorial discipline: each new product carries the cost of certification, sourcing, and packaging commitment Dragonfly applies to existing ones. Adding a "Mango Passion Burst" flavoured tea would require sourcing organic mango and passion fruit (expensive, sometimes impossible at scale) and would dilute the brand's single-ingredient candour. The decision to stay narrow is a deliberate founder choice that distinguishes Dragonfly from herbal-tea competitors who chase flavour novelty.

Dragonfly's growth trajectory

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Dragonfly's growth trajectory, Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-bruce-ginsberg-dragonfly/*

Dragonfly grew slowly and deliberately through the 1990s, building distribution through health-food stores rather than mainstream supermarkets. Mainstream supermarket presence came gradually from the late 1990s as organic and plastic-free moved up British consumer priorities; by the 2010s Dragonfly was stocked widely in UK supermarkets in the premium herbal segment, alongside Pukka and Clipper. The brand has resisted private-equity acquisition (unlike many UK herbal brands which have been bought by Unilever, ABF, or Tata) and remains family-led. That independence is unusual for a 35-year-old premium herbal brand in Britain and is a deliberate Ginsberg-family choice.

The Cederberg rooibos region context

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The Cederberg rooibos region context, Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-bruce-ginsberg-dragonfly/*

The Cederberg region of the Western Cape, South Africa, is the only place on Earth where rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis*) grows commercially. The plant is endemic to this specific terroir; commercial cultivation outside the Cederberg has been attempted but always failed because the plant requires the region's specific

soil and climate combination. This terroir-restriction means rooibos has natural appellation-like quality controls; every authentic rooibos in the world comes from a handful of Cederberg producers, including the descendants of the rooibos trade Ginsberg's family pioneered. Modern rooibos has Protected Designation of Origin status in the EU since 2021, formally recognising the Cederberg-only requirement. The Ginsberg family rooibos was estate-direct from this region for three generations before British supermarket rooibos became mainstream.

Reference noted

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- [EFSA: Pesticides in food](#)
- [Soil Association organic standards](#)

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Tea reading

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Tea reading, Bruce Ginsberg: Dragonfly and the Organic Bet. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-bruce-ginsberg-dragonfly/*

For the modern Dragonfly brand see the [Dragonfly deep dive](#). For rooibos basics see the [rooibos guide](#) and [rooibos benefits](#). For comparable certified-organic herbals see [Pukka organic and B Corp](#) and [Clipper Fairtrade](#). For other tea founders see [Thomas Lipton](#). For organic certification context see the [organic tea guide](#).

The bottom line on Bruce Ginsberg

Ginsberg is the third-generation Cederberg-to-London thread, a rare case in British tea of a founder whose biography actually shows up in the product. Dragonfly is significant for proving that organic, plastic-free, single-ingredient herbal tea was a viable brand position in 1988 London, fifteen years before the mainstream organic wave caught up. The brand has stayed close to founder logic for over 35 years, prioritising editorial integrity over flavour-led range expansion. He is the obvious modern-founder counterweight in any tea-people section, balancing the giants (Twinning, Lipton) with a quieter, more authentic third-generation case.

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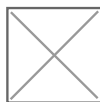
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