The People Behind Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **The people behind tea, in summary:** The full Tea People profile index: ancient foundations, British founders, modern brands and fictional icons. Why people, not leaves, shape tea.

Tea is usually told as a story of leaves and water. It is just as much a story of people, the ones who traded it, branded it, wrote about it, and made the rest of us care. This is the full index of our Tea People entries, and a neutral wiki links these people out to their own channels and sites wherever they are living, because that is what neutral means.

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

The historical foundations

Lu Yu, the Tang dynasty author of the Cha Jing and the reason tea is treated as a craft at all. Thomas Twining, who put leaf tea into British homes from a Strand shop in 1706. Sir Thomas Lipton, the Glasgow grocer who integrated estate to shelf. Thomas Sullivan, credited with the accidental tea bag. And the older British story in Robert Fortune, Anna, Duchess of Bedford and Catherine of Braganza.

The modern founders

The people who built the brands on your shelf, profiled clearly and linked to their own sites: Bruce Ginsberg of Dragonfly, Sebastian Pole and Tim Westwell of Pukka, and Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle of Teapigs. The living tea communicators are covered too: Don Mei of Mei Leaf, Jesse Appell, Wu Mountain, Henrietta Lovell and Stephen Twining, each linked to their own channel or company.

The cultural icons

How a nation feels about tea is shaped by culture as much as commerce: Uncle Iroh, Captain Picard, Mrs Doyle and Arthur Dent, plus the etiquette in how to take afternoon tea properly.

Why this section exists

Two reasons. It is the most engaging, most human part of the wiki, the part people read for pleasure rather than to buy. And it is where the wiki proves it is genuinely a wiki and not a shop in disguise, by linking generously to the real people, including direct competitors, rather than walling readers in. Follow the links;

most go somewhere we do not profit from, and that is the point.

All Tea People profiles at a glance

Category	Profiles available
Ancient foundations	Lu Yu (Tang dynasty Cha Jing author)
British retail founders	Thomas Twining (1706), Sir Thomas Lipton (1890s Ceylon), Thomas Sullivan (tea bag)
British historical figures	Catherine of Braganza, Anna Duchess of Bedford, Robert Fortune
Modern UK founders	Bruce Ginsberg (Dragonfly), Pole+Westwell (Pukka), Kilby+Cheadle (Teapigs)
Living tea communicators	Don Mei (Mei Leaf), Jesse Appell, Henrietta Lovell, Stephen Twining
Fictional tea icons	Uncle Iroh, Captain Picard, Mrs Doyle, Arthur Dent
Total entries	20+ figures across historical, modern, and cultural categories
Sourcing approach	Linked to figures' own channels and sites where living
Editorial stance	Neutral wiki; not all profiled people are tea suppliers

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (history)

FROM THE CURATOR

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Tea reading

For the deep Chinese foundations see Lu Yu. For the British commercial story see Thomas Twining and Thomas Lipton. For the tea-bag accident see Thomas Sullivan. For modern founders see the Pukka founders and the Teapigs founders. For cultural icons see Uncle Iroh. For the broader story see the history of tea in Britain.

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea

- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag

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