

Dilmah: The Ceylon Tea Brand That Owns Its Story

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Dilmah, in summary: Dilmah, founded 1988 by Merrill J. Fernando: producer-owned single-origin Ceylon, ethics built into the company structure rather than bolted on.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Dilmah: The Ceylon Tea Brand That Owns Its Story. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/dilmah-deep-dive/>*

Dilmah is one of the most distinctive brands we stock, because it is built on an idea as much as a product: that the country that grows the tea should profit from it. You can buy the range now on the [Dilmah shop page](#) ; this is the story behind it, and it pairs with our [Ceylon tea guide](#) and the [black tea by origin](#) map.

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

The founding idea

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The founding idea, Dilmah: The Ceylon Tea Brand That Owns Its Story. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/dilmah-deep-dive/>*

Dilmah was founded in 1988 by Merrill J. Fernando, a Sri Lankan tea taster who spent decades arguing that the value of Ceylon tea was being extracted by multinationals while the growing country saw little of it. Dilmah was created as a producer-owned brand: grown, picked, blended and packed at origin in Sri Lanka rather than shipped out as a commodity and branded elsewhere. The name itself comes from his sons, Dilhan and Malik. It is one of the genuine ethical-origin stories in mainstream tea, not a marketing retrofit.

Single-origin Ceylon

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Single-origin Ceylon, Dilmah: The Ceylon Tea Brand That Owns Its Story. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/dilmah-deep-dive/>*

Dilmah is unapologetically single-origin: pure Ceylon tea rather than a multi-country blend tuned for cost. That matters because Ceylon has a real, identifiable character, brisk, bright, citrus-edged, that changes with elevation, all covered in our [Ceylon guide](#). Its Watte range presents four Ceylon altitude levels side by side

and is the single clearest demonstration of how elevation changes the cup. A single-origin brand lets that character show rather than blending it into anonymity, which is the opposite of the commodity-blend model and the whole point of the founding argument.

What they make

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What they make, Dilmah: The Ceylon Tea Brand That Owns Its Story. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/dilmah-deep-dive/>*

The range runs from pure Ceylon black and Earl Grey to green, flavoured and the premium t-Series. The Ceylon black and the loose-leaf green are the truest expressions of what the brand is for; the flavoured lines are competent but the single-origin purity is the reason to choose Dilmah specifically. Browse the stocked range on the [Dilmah shop page](#) and use the [black tea](#) and [green tea](#) guides to choose by style.

Ethics as structure, not slogan

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Ethics as structure, not slogan, Dilmah: The Ceylon Tea Brand That Owns Its Story. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/dilmah-deep-dive/>*

Dilmah built charitable and environmental commitments into the company structure through the MJF Charitable Foundation and conservation work, funded by the business rather than bolted on. As with the certification stories in [Pukka organic and B Corp](#) and [Clipper Fairtrade](#), the clear reading is that this is genuine and structural rather than greenwash, and it is a legitimate reason to choose the brand if that matters to you.

How to brew it

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for How to brew it, Dilmah: The Ceylon Tea Brand That Owns Its Story. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/dilmah-deep-dive/>*

Treat Dilmah Ceylon black as the brisk black tea it is: fully boiling water, a real three to four minute steep, milk optional, see the [water temperature guide](#). The loose-leaf green wants water off the boil and a short steep, per [how to brew green tea](#). High-grown Ceylon is bright enough to enjoy without milk, which is part of its appeal.

Who it is for

Dilmah is for the drinker who wants clear single-origin Ceylon and cares that the growing country profits, rather than the cheapest possible blend. It is not a delicate connoisseur's tea nor a bargain everyday filler; it is dependable, characterful, ethically coherent Ceylon, and the [Darjeeling vs Assam vs Ceylon](#) comparison shows exactly where that character sits.

The founding story, in one place

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Aspect	Dilmah
Founder / year	Merrill J. Fernando, 1988; a Sri Lankan tea taster
The argument	Ceylon tea's value was extracted by multinationals while the growing country saw little
The answer	a producer-owned brand: grown, picked, blended and packed at origin
The name	from his sons Dilhan and Malik
Ethics	MJF Charitable Foundation and conservation built into the company, business-funded

Reference noted

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- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

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Tea reading

- [Dilmah \(the main guide\)](#)
- [Ceylon tea guide](#)
- [British tea brands](#)
- [black tea reference](#)

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