Typhoo: The Birmingham Brand Sold on Health

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Typhoo, in summary:** Typhoo tea brand explained: 1903 Birmingham origin as a marketed health aid, the fine-leaf claim, big-four UK mainstream context, UK price.

Typhoo is one of the historic British everyday brands, with an origin unusually rooted in health marketing. Buy it on the Typhoo shop page; here is the Typhoo story, best read alongside the best UK tea brands guide and black tea guide.

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

A grocer's blend, 1903

Typhoo was created in 1903 in Birmingham by grocer John Sumner, reportedly after his sister found a fine leaf tea easier on her stomach. He marketed Typhoo explicitly on its supposed digestive gentleness, an early example of health positioning in tea, and the name is said to derive from a Chinese word for doctor. Whatever the exact etymology, the health angle was the founding pitch.

The fine leaf claim

Typhoo's early selling point was that it used the smaller leaf rather than the stalk and coarse material, marketed as easier on the stomach. The modern equivalent of "what is actually in the bag" is covered in our loose leaf vs tea bags and pyramid bag pages; the lesson is that leaf grade really does change the cup, something Typhoo was unusually early to sell on.

One of the big four

Typhoo became one of the major British everyday brands alongside PG Tips, Tetley and Yorkshire, the field mapped in Yorkshire vs PG Tips, Tetley vs PG Tips and the best British tea bags roundup. Together the four account for roughly three-quarters of UK black tea by bag count. Typhoo sits in the everyday value tier: a dependable, brisk, milk-friendly British black rather than a premium or single-origin tea.

What they make

The core is the Original Breakfast black tea in everyday formats, plus instant and value lines, browse the stocked range on the Typhoo shop page. It is engineered for a strong, consistent, affordable cup with milk, the same brief as the other giants, judged in the best UK tea brands guide.

How to brew it

Treat it as the sturdy everyday black it is: fully boiling water, a proper steep, no stewing, milk to taste, see common brewing mistakes and the water temperature guide. In hard water areas it suffers the same flattening as any black, the reason a filter or a hard-water-tuned blend helps, see Yorkshire Tea Hard Water for the principle.

Who it is for

Typhoo is for the everyday drinker watching value who wants a strong, dependable, inexpensive British cuppa with a long history behind the name. It will not out-class a quality leaf brand, see best Teapigs tea, and is not trying to; on its own everyday value terms it delivers.

Quick reference: Typhoo (the Birmingham health-claim brand)

Field	Detail
Founded	1903 in Birmingham by John Sumner Jr; originally sold as a digestive aid
Original positioning	"Typhoo Tipps" sold as a health tonic for "delicate constitutions" with claims of digestive benefit
Current owner	Supreme Imports (acquired 2024 from Apeejay Surrendra)
Type	Mainstream value-tier black tea blend, predominantly Assam and Kenyan
Cup character	Brisk, full-bodied, milk-friendly; classic UK builder's brew profile
The fine leaf claim	Original Sumner marketing emphasised small leaf grade (CTC dust); novel in 1903 when most tea was whole-leaf
One of the big four	Typhoo sits alongside PG Tips, Tetley, and Yorkshire as a dominant UK mainstream brand
UK price	£2-£3.50 per 80-bag pack (3-5p per cup)

How Typhoo’s health-claim positioning shifted

The pseudo-medical positioning that defined Typhoo’s early-20th-century marketing was not unusual at the time. Before the NHS, many British goods carried medical claims that would be illegal today, and Typhoo's promise of an easier stomach sat in that regulatory grey zone. The Advertising Standards Authority’s 1962 founding and the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 tightened consumer-protection rules; food and drink health claims became more carefully regulated through the 1970s and 80s; and the EU Food and Health Claims Regulation (2006) effectively eliminated unsubstantiated tea health claims across the UK market.

Typhoo’s marketing shifted accordingly. By the 1980s and 90s the brand emphasised brewing technique, cup quality and family use rather than health benefit, and the marketing budget that had once carried health-claim copy moved to mascot campaigns and sports sponsorship. The 2024 Supreme Imports acquisition continued this mainstream-everyday positioning; expect no return to the original digestive-aid framing.

The cricket sponsorship era

Typhoo's long-running cricket sponsorship has been a defining UK brand-association detail. The brand sponsored England Test matches and county cricket for decades through the late 20th century, with Typhoo-branded scorecards, ground signage and Test programme inserts becoming part of UK cricket's visual identity. The cricket association tied Typhoo to a specifically English, summer-afternoon, social cultural register that competing brands did not occupy. Modern sponsorship deals have shifted, but the cricket-and-tea association is still meaningful to older UK drinkers; for a generation, the "tea break" at the cricket ground meant the actual Typhoo brand as much as the activity.

The bottom line on Typhoo

One of the four UK mainstream tea brands, distinguished by its 1903 Birmingham origin as a marketed digestive health aid. The health claims have faded with regulation; the daily-drinker positioning remains. Worth buying as a dependable value-tier UK black tea, particularly in the Midlands where brand loyalty is strongest. The cup quality is broadly comparable to PG Tips and Tetley at the same shelf height; brand choice in this band really comes down to palate and family tradition rather than a meaningful quality difference.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Two or three good bags take a Typhoo order past £35, where UK delivery becomes free. Better a small, varied basket than one big Typhoo splurge.

Tea reading

For the practical brewing companion see the Typhoo brewing and buying guide. For competitor context see the PG Tips, the Tetley and the Yorkshire Tea brands. For category context see the black tea fundamentals, and for value-buying the under 10p per cup guide.

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