Tim d’Offay and Postcard Teas

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **The short version:** A UK guide to Tim d'Offay and Postcard Teas: Mayfair specialty tea shop, single-farm sourcing model, transparent provenance, anti-fraud framework.

Postcard Teas helped popularise naming the farm on the packet. This sits in the tea people cluster beside the Rare Tea Lady.

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

Profile based on public information and the person's own published work, accurate as of May 2026. No private detail or invented quotes; we describe roles and reputation, not gossip.

Tim d'Offay and Postcard Teas at a glance

Detail	Fact
Founder	Tim d'Offay
Business	Postcard Teas, London tea merchant and shop
Founded	2007
Shop location	9 Dering Street, Mayfair, London
Sourcing approach	Direct relationships with small farms, named on packaging
Innovation	"Single farm" tea positioning, like wine domain rather than blend
Reputation	One of the most respected specialty tea shops in Europe
Audience	Serious tea drinkers, hospitality trade, food-and-drink professionals
Range scope	~150+ teas sourced from named single farms across major tea-producing regions
Editorial discipline	Transparent provenance, refusal to stock teas without verifiable origin

Who he is and the single-farm model

Tim d'Offay is the founder of Postcard Teas, a respected London merchant and shop known for direct relationships with small growers and unusual transparency about origin. Its core innovation is single-farm positioning: rather than selling anonymous blends or single-region tea, Postcard Teas names the actual farm or farmer on the packet, treating tea origin the way fine wine treats a domain. That requires sourcing directly rather than through merchant intermediaries, so d'Offay travels regularly to tea regions and builds

relationships with the same small farms over years. It carries real commercial costs and limits volume, but it produces genuine traceability. See single origin vs blended.

The Mayfair shop

The shop at 9 Dering Street in Mayfair is small but well known, functioning as both retail outlet and informal education space: tea is served by the cup for in-shop tasting, events run regularly, and customers can talk teas through with knowledgeable staff. The few square metres belie the depth of the selection and the buying expertise, and d'Offay is often present in person. It has become a UK hub for the serious specialty trade, with London restaurant and hotel sommeliers sourcing through it.

The book

D'Offay also co-wrote A Modern Way to Drink Tea, a practical guide to single-farm specialty tea for British drinkers, covering categories, brewing, the sourcing philosophy and recommended teas. Its register matches the shop: transparent provenance, no marketing romance, and respect for genuine craft without exaggeration. It sits alongside Tony Gebely's Tea: A User's Guide as a key English-language resource for serious drinkers. See best tea books.

Transparency as a defence against fraud

The transparency model is a genuine defence against provenance fraud. A buyer from Postcard Teas gets a specific farm name they can in principle verify, which is structurally different from buying rare ancient tea from a marketplace seller with no traceable chain. It does not remove every risk, since the farm relationships are themselves trust-based, but it builds layered verification that scams do not survive: the Wee Tea Company fraud, selling imported tea as Scottish-grown, could not have run through a supply chain like this. See the Wee Tea Company fraud.

Long-term grower relationships

Part of what makes the model work is its long-term relationship approach. D'Offay tends to buy from the same farms over many years, often a decade or more, rather than chasing new sources each season. That lets a farmer plan production against reliable demand, improves quality consistency through repeated cycles, and makes price negotiation less adversarial than spot-market buying. It mirrors how high-end wine merchants work with specific domains, and the consistency it produces is invisible at a single purchase but real for a sustained customer.

Who it suits

Postcard Teas serves serious drinkers willing to pay a premium for verifiable provenance and high-quality processing, including restaurant and hotel sommeliers and food-and-drink professionals, as well as individuals who have moved beyond supermarket tea. It is not a casual high-street shop, and entry-level customers may find the range and pricing daunting, but for anyone stepping up from a premium brand into genuine single-farm tea it is an obvious next stop, with in-shop staff to ease the transition. See ethical sourcing.

What to buy

For comparable single-origin specialty tea buy single-origin loose-leaf or Darjeeling single-estate. For traceable Chinese tea buy Longjing or Yunnan single-estate. For traceable Japanese tea buy single-grower sencha or premium gyokuro. For traceable Sri Lankan tea buy Ceylon single-estate. For brands with similar transparency principles buy Clipper organic or Teapigs.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · A small reliable stash beats a big curious one. Cycle two or three teas you genuinely enjoy.

More tea reading

For comparable specialty figures see Henrietta Lovell of the Rare Tea Company, Don Mei of Mei Leaf and Tony Gebely. For the single-origin context see single origin vs blended tea. For the ethical framework see ethical tea sourcing. For provenance-fraud cases see the Wee Tea Company fraud and tea scams and frauds.

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