Own Brand Tea vs Branded Tea: Is It Worth It?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Own brand tea vs branded, in summary:** Own brand vs branded tea: mostly the same blended CTC bag category. What the premium buys, where own brand wins, and why format beats label.

Is supermarket own brand tea really worse than the big names? Other brand pages that pair with it include is PG Tips good.

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

Own brand and branded side by side

	Own brand	Branded
Price	Lower, often markedly	Higher, you pay for the name
Category	Blended CTC black in bags	Blended CTC black in bags
Consistency	Good in mid and premium tiers	Tightly controlled batch to batch
Water tuning	Rare	Sometimes (hard/soft blends)
The real upgrade	Loose leaf, not a dearer bag	Loose leaf, not a dearer bag

The four questions hiding in "is it good"

"Is this brand good" is really four questions wearing one coat, and answering them separately is more useful than any verdict. Value: is it a reliable, consistent everyday cup for the money? Most big UK names are, because that is what they are engineered to be. Leaf quality: is it graded whole leaf, or the fast-brewing CTC dust that fills standard bags? Almost all mass-market bags are the latter, by deliberate design for strength, speed and price. Ethics and sourcing: certification, organic status, packaging plastic, supply-chain transparency, a separate ledger covered in the brand ownership map. And taste preference, which no review can settle for you. A brand can score high on value and modestly on leaf grade at once, and saying so clearly beats a thumbs up or down, see is PG Tips good.

The real upgrade is format, not label

The most clarifying fact in this whole debate is that own brand versus branded happens almost entirely inside one category: brisk CTC black tea in bags. The differences between names there are real but modest,

blend recipe, water-hardness tuning, bag material, certification and batch consistency, differences of degree inside one product class, not differences of class. The really large quality step is not between two supermarket boxes; it is between that whole category and graded loose leaf tea you can see, smell, measure and steep again, see loose leaf vs tea bags. So the practical move is to buy the best-value bag for daily life, often own brand or a mid builder's tier, and spend the saved money on trying loose leaf rather than a pricier bag in the same class. Where branded really earns its premium is tight batch consistency and specific tuning, such as a hard water blend, which can matter to a daily drinker, see best water for tea.

Ethics and ownership are a separate ledger

A second confusion worth dismantling is letting a brand's ethical story, or the reputation of its corporate parent, stand in for a judgement of the tea. Documented organic or Fairtrade credentials and packaging that really is plastic free deserve credit for exactly those things, and a buyer led by values is being rational even if the leaf grade is mainstream. Equally, ownership by a large multinational does not disqualify a brand from making a reliable everyday tea; scale and cup quality are simply not the same axis, which is why the ownership map is a companion to the quality question, not a substitute for it. Conflating the two produces lazy verdicts in both directions.

Premium bag is not a format change

One last misread to correct: a brand's premium bagged line is usually a tighter, often larger-leaf or pyramid version of the same idea, a better bag in the same category, not a leap into another one. That can be a good buy if you value the consistency and convenience, but treating "premium bag" as the top of the ladder is exactly the mistake to avoid; put that money towards trying loose leaf instead, where the difference is large and visible, see loose leaf vs tea bags.

What to buy

Own brand versus branded is mostly a value question within one category; the real upgrade is format, not label. Pick the best-value bag, then put the saving towards loose leaf tea or a proper black tea. Browse the full tea shop; free UK delivery over £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Match the tea to the moment. A 6am own brand mug and a 4pm branded one can sit happily side by side.

Tea-brand reading

- Is PG Tips good
- Loose leaf vs tea bags
- Best water for tea

- Brand ownership map

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