Typhoo History: From Doctor's Tea to Supreme

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Typhoo history, in summary:** Founded in 1903 in Birmingham by grocer John Sumner Jr., originally sold as a digestive-aid "doctor's tea". After the Cadbury era and a string of owners, it hit serious financial trouble and was acquired by Supreme in 2024. Real 120-year heritage, a turbulent recent chapter.

Typhoo is a historic British brand with a turbulent recent chapter. This sits in the brand-history cluster beside Yorkshire Tea history.

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

The 1903 Birmingham founding

The origin story has a documented basis. John Sumner Jr., a Birmingham grocer, blended a fine dust-grade tea in 1903 for his sister Mary, who had digestive trouble, and launched it as a branded product, "Typhoo Tipps", departing from generic loose-tea retail. The "Typhoo" name is said to come from a Mandarin word associated with "doctor", reflecting the original health positioning, while "Tipps" referred to the golden leaf tips of the grade, the wider arc the history of tea guide tells. That stomach friendly marketing was sincere for its time but would not pass today's rules on medical claims. The brand grew strongly through the inter-war years, reaching second place in the UK market behind Lipton by the 1930s.

The timeline

Year	Event
1903	John Sumner Jr. launches "Typhoo Tipps" in Birmingham
1930s	Reaches second in the UK market, behind Lipton
1968	Acquired by Cadbury Schweppes; renamed "Typhoo Tea"
1985	Divested to Premier Brands
2005	Acquired by India's Apeejay Surrendra Group
2010s-2020s	Serious financial difficulty and declining share
2024	Acquired by UK-based Supreme Group

Ownership transitions

Typhoo's ownership instability is an extreme example of a broad UK pattern. The Cadbury Schweppes era (1968-1985) brought corporate scale, advertising budget and the rename from "Typhoo Tipps" to "Typhoo Tea", and substantially shaped the modern brand. It then passed to Premier Brands, then to India's Apeejay Surrendra Group in 2005, the chain the ownership map sets out. Through the 2010s and 2020s it faced sustained competitive pressure, declining UK tea consumption per head and pricing squeeze, leading to financial distress and, eventually, administration, the events the what happened guide details. It was acquired by the UK-based Supreme Group in 2024, the current chapter the who owns Typhoo now page covers.

Where it stands today

Typhoo continues as a mass-market UK tea brand under Supreme, with standard tea bags, a decaffeinated Typhoo One line, green tea and herbal infusions, competing at the commodity tier with Tetley, Yorkshire Tea and supermarket own-brands. Its sustainability credentials are moderate, behind Yorkshire Tea and Tetley on certification breadth, partly a consequence of the financial pressure that constrained investment. It is a significant but no longer leading brand, overtaken by Yorkshire Tea in the 2010s, and a careful buyer reads the heritage marketing against that current reality, the standard the is Typhoo still good page applies.

Common questions

How old is Typhoo? It dates to 1903, founded in Birmingham by grocer John Sumner Jr., giving it over 120 years of heritage.

What does "Typhoo" mean? The name is said to derive from a Mandarin word associated with "doctor", reflecting its original digestive-aid positioning.

Who owns Typhoo now? The UK-based Supreme Group, which acquired it in 2024 after a period of financial distress and administration.

Is Typhoo still a digestive aid? No. That was the 1903 marketing; modern health-claim standards do not support it. It is an ordinary everyday tea.

Compare the UK heritage brands

Weigh Typhoo against the current leaders and a better loose leaf in the brand directory or the full tea shop. Judge Typhoo on what each cup costs; a basket above £35 ships to UK addresses at no charge.

Browse the tea range

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (history)

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