Who Makes Supermarket Tea? The Copacker Reality

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Who makes supermarket tea, in summary:** Supermarkets rarely grow or blend their own tea. Own-label is blended and packed by big tea companies (Tata/Tetley, Unilever, Bettys & Taylors) and specialist co-packers, from largely Kenyan and Indian leaf. It is normal practice, not a scandal, and it is exactly why own-brand "dupes" work.

"Who actually makes the supermarket's own tea?" is a great question. This sits in the brand-history cluster beside the ethical scorecard.

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

The answer

Supermarkets very rarely grow or blend tea themselves. Own-label tea is typically blended and packed by large tea companies and specialist co-packers, the same firms behind the big brands, which is why own-label and branded everyday tea are so often the same broad commodity category, the "dupe" reality the own brand vs branded guide sets out. This is not a secret scandal: co-packing is normal across food retail, a matter of efficiency rather than deception. What really varies is the blend specification, the certification and the tier (value or premium own label), even from the same packer.

At a glance

Question	The read
Who blends it?	Big tea companies and specialist co-packers, not the shop
Where is the leaf from?	Largely Kenyan and Indian CTC, the everyday commodity base
Is co-packing dodgy?	No, it is normal food-retail practice, efficiency not deception
What varies?	Blend spec, certification and tier (value vs premium own-label)
Practical upshot	Base is often similar, so cost per cup and a blind taste beat the logo

Why it changes what you drink

Once you know the same packers supply both own-label and branded everyday tea from similar Kenyan and Indian CTC, the logic of the value cluster falls into place: for standard everyday tea, an own-label can be a close, much cheaper match, which is exactly why supermarket dupes work. The differences that remain are

real but specific, a tighter blend spec or a particular certification, rather than a wholesale gap in quality. So judge by the cup and the price, not the brand name on the box.

Ethics and value still apply

Two things do not disappear just because tea is own-label. Ethics still apply, and own-label can carry the same certifications as the brands, so check the pack rather than assuming, the schemes the Fairtrade guide explains. And value still rewards arithmetic: since the base is often similar, cost per cup and a blind taste matter far more than the logo, the method the cost per cup guide sets out. Read the certification on the actual pack, do the per-cup maths, and let a blind taste settle it.

Common questions

Do supermarkets make their own tea? Rarely. Own-label is blended and packed by big tea companies and specialist co-packers, not the retailer itself.

Is own-label the same as the branded tea? Often the same broad commodity base from the same packers, which is why dupes work. Blend spec, certification and tier still vary.

Is co-packing a con? No. It is standard across food retail, a matter of efficiency. What matters is what's in the cup and what it costs, not the label.

Is own-label less ethical? Not necessarily. It can carry the same certifications as the brands, so check the actual pack rather than assuming.

Judge the cup, not the logo

Compare own-label against the brands on cost per cup and a blind taste across the brand directory or the full tea shop, and read the dupes guide first. Whoever packs it, compare tea by the cost per cup; UK delivery is free beyond £35.

Browse the tea range

Reference noted

- Encyclopaedia Britannica: Tea (history)

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Freshness beats provenance for most drinkers. Buy a smaller bag more often.

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