# British Tea Brands Compared

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **In short:** How Britain's familiar tea brands differ: the blends, the ranges, who owns each one and where the leaf is actually grown. For a ranked pick by category, see best tea brands UK.

*Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team on 8 August 2026. Brand ownership and the products we stock were checked again on 18 September 2026.*

**Four familiar, widely stocked names in British black tea in the UK: Yorkshire Tea, PG Tips, Tetley and Twinings.** This guide explains what is in each blend, which company owns each brand and where the leaf is actually grown, rather than presenting a temporary sales table as a permanent ranking. Knowing what's in each (and what makes each different) is the cheapest way to start drinking better tea, because you can swap brand without changing anything else about your routine.

It covers the brand histories, blend characters and range differences, the ownership map and where the leaf is really sourced from. For deeper individual brand information, the dedicated deep dive pages provide much more detail.

## The British tea market shape

Black tea remains central to the British tea shelf, alongside established green tea, herbal and fruit-infusion ranges. Sales shares move with promotions, pack changes and reporting periods, so this guide avoids freezing a short-term market snapshot into an evergreen claim.

The market structure:

- **Everyday black tea** includes Yorkshire, PG Tips, Tetley and supermarket own label
- **Heritage black tea ranges** include Twinings
- **Whole-leaf bags** include Teapigs and comparable specialist ranges
- **Organic herbal ranges** include Pukka and Clipper
- **Discount tier:** supermarket own label and Lipton Yellow Label

For the wider cultural background to tea in Britain, see the British tea culture overview.

## Brand ownership map

The current ownership structure of major British tea brands:

- **Yorkshire Tea** Taylors of Harrogate (independent family business since 1886)
- **PG Tips** Lipton Teas and Infusions (CVC Capital Partners, since 2022)
- **Tetley** Tata Consumer Products (since 2000)
- **Twinings** Associated British Foods (since 1964)
- **Teapigs** Tata Consumer Products, which funded its 2006 launch
- **Pukka** Lipton Teas and Infusions (bought by Unilever in 2017; Lipton Teas and Infusions since 2022)
- **Clipper** Ecotone, formerly Wessanen (since 2012)
- **Yogi** Yogi Tea (independent, US based)
- **Dragonfly:** independent UK ownership since 1990
- **Hyson:** privately owned Sri Lankan business

For drinkers who specifically value family ownership or independent brands, Yorkshire Tea and Dragonfly are independently owned; most of the other major brands have been acquired by international FMCG groups over the last two decades.

### Where the brands are really sourced from

One useful clarification: most British brand names refer to where the tea is blended or marketed, not where it's grown. The actual leaf comes from:

- **Kenya:** dominant in Yorkshire Tea, PG Tips, Tetley
- **Assam (NE India)** significant in Yorkshire Gold, English Breakfast blends, Irish Breakfast
- **Sri Lanka (Ceylon)** included in many breakfast blends; primary source for Hyson
- **Rwanda:** growing significance, particularly in Yorkshire Gold
- **Malawi:** supports many British supermarket tier brands
- **China** Keemun in premium blends, lapsang in specialty teas
- **Vietnam, Indonesia, India (Darjeeling and other regions)** supporting roles across various brands

The "British" in British tea brands refers to blending, packaging, and marketing rather than agricultural origin. Britain doesn't grow significant tea (Tregothnan in Cornwall produces small quantities of British grown tea but isn't a major commercial source).

### Yorkshire Tea (Taylors of Harrogate)

Yorkshire Tea is owned by the independent family business Bettys & Taylors of Harrogate. Its everyday blends are widely stocked across the UK.

The blend leans on **Kenyan and Assam** leaf, with smaller amounts of Sri Lankan tea. Despite the name, very little of the tea is actually grown in Yorkshire (that would be challenging) though it is blended in Harrogate. The cup is brisk, fairly strong, takes milk well, and is consistent batch to batch (which is the actual selling point of any major brand).

Three sub blends worth knowing:

- **Yorkshire Tea Original:** the standard red box
- **Yorkshire Gold:** a stronger blend with more Assam, slightly more expensive. Closer to a proper builders' brew. Three origin blend (Assam, Rwanda, Kenya)
- **Yorkshire Hard Water:** blended for hard water areas (London, Cambridge, parts of the South East)
- **Yorkshire Decaf:** the decaf version retains more character than most decaf options because the underlying blend is strong
- **Yorkshire Tea Bedtime Brew:** gently decaffeinated Yorkshire Tea blended with lemon balm and nutmeg; it is not a caffeine-free herbal infusion

Yorkshire Tea has built one of the strongest brand identities in British FMCG through the Sean Bean and Patrick Stewart "Where everything's done proper" campaigns. The family ownership stability has provided continuity that corporate owned competitors haven't matched. See the Yorkshire Tea story.

### PG Tips

PG Tips is part of LIPTON Teas and Infusions. Its claim to fame is the **pyramid bag** introduced in 1996, which gives the leaves more room to expand than a flat bag.

The standard PG Tips blend is Kenyan led, fast brewing, designed for a 60-second steep with milk. The cup is slightly less malty than Yorkshire and slightly more brisk. It's the cup you grew up with if you're British and over 30.

PG also do a **premium** range (Gold) and a **decaf** that's competitively priced compared to Twinings. The brand's best known marketing was the chimps adverts (1956 to 2002), one of the most recognised British advertising campaigns of the 20th century.

For more detail see the PG Tips deep dive and the Yorkshire vs PG Tips comparison.

### Tetley

Founded in 1837, Tetley is now part of Tata Consumer Products. The standard Tetley blend is broader based: Indian and African leaf, slightly less malty than Yorkshire, more rounded and less brisk than PG. A "fine balance" blend rather than a heavy one.

Tetley were innovators on the bag side: they introduced the round bag in the UK in the 1980s and the drawstring bag in the 2000s. Both ergonomic improvements that everyone else copied.

The **Tetley British Blend** (sold in the US) is closer to the original Tetley recipe; the UK supermarket version is now a slightly different blend. Tetley's range is one of the broader in the British market, covering:

- **Tetley Original:** the standard everyday blend
- **Tetley Decaf:** the decaf version
- **Tetley Gold:** the premium upgrade
- **Tetley Earl Grey:** bergamot flavoured option
- **Tetley Pure Green Tea** plus various flavoured greens
- **Tetley Redbush:** rooibos under the English translation name
- **Tetley Super Teas:** blends pitched as functional drinks

- **Tetley Cleanse and everyday cups:** herbal wellness
- **Tetley Sleep blend:** evening herbal

The Tetley range breadth is one of the broader available from any single mainstream UK brand. See the Tetley deep dive, the Yorkshire vs Tetley comparison, and the Tetley vs PG Tips comparison.

### Twinings

Founded 1706, the oldest of the four by a wide margin, and the only one with a substantial range beyond breakfast tea. Owned by Associated British Foods. Twinings holds Royal Warrants from the British Royal Family continuously since 1837 and still trades from its original 1706 shop at 216 Strand in London.

Twinings is the place most people start when they want to drink something that isn't standard breakfast tea. The range covers:

- **Everyday:** their answer to PG Tips. Decent
- **English Breakfast:** slightly more refined than the supermarket mainstream blends, includes some Keemun
- **Earl Grey:** the standard against which other Earl Greys are judged
- **Lady Grey, Russian Caravan, Prince of Wales:** speciality blends that taste of something specific rather than just "strong tea"
- **Lapsang Souchong, Darjeeling, Assam:** single origin and specialty Chinese style options
- **Green tea, white tea, herbal infusions:** broad coverage at supermarket friendly prices. The quality varies; the herbal infusions are reliably good, the green teas are middling
- **Decaf range:** several decaf blends
- **Wellness blends** Products named "Sleep", "Calm" and "Defence", sold as functional blends
- **Superblends:** blends positioned at the premium end

For more detail see the Twinings deep dive.

### The other major brands worth knowing

Beyond the big four, several other brands have significant UK presence:

**Teapigs**, the premium whole leaf tea brand founded in 2006. Pyramid “tea temples” with whole leaf inside, giving a cup closer to loose leaf than typical bag tea. Owned by Tata Consumer Products (same parent as Tetley) but operates with distinct premium positioning. See the Teapigs deep dive.

**Pukka**, the British organic herbal tea brand founded in 2001. Broad organic and Fair for Life certification and Ayurvedic influenced blends. Bought by Unilever in 2017 and now part of Lipton Teas and Infusions; it stopped being a B Corp after that move (reported in April 2024). See the Pukka deep dive.

**Clipper**, the affordable organic and Fairtrade brand founded in 1984. Full organic and Fairtrade certification at lower prices than Pukka, with broader supermarket distribution. See the Clipper deep dive.

**Hyson**, the Sri Lankan tea specialist. Vertically integrated Ceylon tea producer with broad UK distribution. Single origin focus. See the Hyson deep dive.

**Dragonfly**, the British independent organic tea brand founded in 1990. Organic across the range, and known for its rooibos. See the Dragonfly deep dive.

**Yogi**, the American herbal tea brand. Spice forward American style with distinctive functional positioning. See the Yogi deep dive.

### Brands beyond the supermarket aisle

Alongside the familiar names sit brands the supermarket aisle never carries: gift tin Ceylon, the European heritage houses and the British specialty names. Listed for reference, not ranked.

- **Mlesna.** Sri Lankan, gift tin specialist, premium presentation.
- **Yamamotoyama.** Japanese brand, widely distributed in the UK.
- **Mariage Frères.** Premium French heritage: boutique presentation, distinctive blends such as Marco Polo, and a London boutique.
- **Kusmi Tea.** Russian French heritage, the distinctive yellow tins, mid premium.
- **Loyd.** Polish tea brand at an accessible price point, increasingly available in the UK.
- **Fortnum & Mason.** Heritage British luxury at premium pricing.
- **Brodies (Edinburgh).** Scottish heritage and a strong Scottish blend tradition.
- **Hampstead Tea.** Organic certified across the range, with strong specialty herbal positioning.

### The price quality ladder

| Tier | Brands | Cup character |
|---|---|---|
| Budget | Supermarket own brand, Lipton Yellow Label | Strong, harsh, acceptable with milk and sugar. Made for cost, not character |
| Mid market | Yorkshire, PG Tips, Tetley | Consistent, milk friendly, the staple of UK kitchens |
| Premium mid market | Twinings English Breakfast, Yorkshire Gold, Twinings Earl Grey | Slightly better leaf, more nuance, suitable for drinking without milk |
| Speciality bagged | Teapigs, Twinings Signature, premium Pukka | Pyramid or premium leaf bagged. Closer to loose leaf quality. Costs several times more per cup than supermarket bags |
| Loose leaf single estate | Williamson, Dilmah, specialist importers | Single garden, single year, named flush. The wine equivalent of "tea" |

### What to swap to, and from what

If you're on supermarket own brand and want a clear upgrade: any of the big four. Yorkshire if you take milk, Twinings if you don't.

If you're on PG Tips or Tetley and want a noticeable step up: Yorkshire Gold or Twinings English Breakfast.

If you're on a major brand teabag and want to try something properly different: a 100g pouch of loose Assam or Ceylon. Brew it once side by side with your regular cup. Either it lands and you stop using bags for the

morning cup, or it doesn't and you've learned something.

What each step up actually changes: more Assam makes the cup maltier and better with milk, whole leaf in a pyramid gives the leaf room to open so the cup is cleaner, and loose single origin drops the blending altogether so you taste one garden and one year rather than a house style held steady. For the picks by category, see best tea brands UK.

### Caffeine varies by product and brew

Caffeine cannot be assigned reliably from a brand name alone. It varies with the leaf, dose, bag size, water temperature, brew time and cup size. Treat regular black tea as caffeinated and decaf tea as lower in caffeine rather than automatically caffeine-free. If you need to manage intake, use current pack information and count every source across the day.

For the wider caffeine context see the ultimate caffeine guide.

### What we stock

Browse the full black tea range, the herbal tea range and the wider catalogue; most of the brands above are on our shelf.

For comparisons across the wider tea landscape, see also: Yorkshire Tea, PG Tips, Tetley, Twinings, Teapigs, Pukka, Clipper, Hyson, Dragonfly, Yogi.

### What this means when you are choosing

The ladder above is the short answer: the big four sit in the same mid market tier and differ by cup character rather than by quality, the premium mid market tier buys better leaf, and the speciality and loose leaf tiers buy a named garden. Which of the big four suits you is personal preference plus habit; once the brand matches your taste, the brewing matters more than the label.

For drinkers wanting to upgrade beyond mass market, the route is straightforward: Yorkshire Gold or Twinings English Breakfast as accessible premium upgrades, then Teapigs as the pyramid premium step, then loose leaf single origin teas as the deep exploration tier. Each step provides a real cup quality improvement; the cost increases meaningfully at each tier but the experience is meaningfully better.

For drinkers wanting to support specific values: Yorkshire Tea for family ownership British heritage; Pukka or Clipper for organic and ethical positioning; Teapigs for whole leaf premium quality; Hyson for single origin Sri Lankan authenticity. Each brand has distinct positioning that suits different consumer priorities.

Most of the brands above are on our shelf; the product links in this guide go to the packs we sell.

*For the wider context see the black tea overview, the British tea culture overview, the builders' brew tradition, the Yorkshire vs PG Tips comparison, the Yorkshire vs Tetley comparison, the Tetley vs PG Tips comparison, the Yorkshire Gold vs Original comparison, the Pukka vs Teapigs comparison, the Yorkshire Tea deep dive, the PG Tips deep dive, the Tetley deep dive, and the Twinings deep dive.*

**From our shelf:** the everyday big names plus the premium step ups, from Yorkshire Tea and Tetley through Twinings and Teapigs to organic Pukka. Browse the full British black tea range, or read the builders' brew tradition and British tea culture guides.

## Cited reference


- Bettys & Taylors: Yorkshire Tea Bedtime Brew product information
- Grace's Guide: R. Twining and Co (bought by Associated British Foods in 1964)
- Talking Retail: Clipper Teas is acquired by Wessanen (March 2012)
- The Grocer: Pukka Herbs loses B Corp accreditation after Lipton integration (April 2024)
- Tata Consumer Products: Teapigs


FROM THE CURATOR

*teas* · Judge the tea in your mug, not the pack in your hand. Explore the rest of the shelf once you know your taste.

## More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag


### Earn rewards on teas.co.uk

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

**+100 pts**

**Create your free account**

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



**100 pts = 1 tree**

**Plant a tree in Scotland**

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/