Stephen Twining, tenth generation

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Profile shot:** Stephen Twining is the public face of Twinings, founded 1706 on the Strand. Why a tenth-generation family ambassador still matters in the British tea.

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

Stephen Twining is the tenth generation member of the Twining family still working at the family tea company, and the most recognisable living face of British tea heritage. If you've ever seen a documentary about British tea, a royal warrant news clip, or a Twinings video where a man in a cravat talks confidently about the difference between a first flush Darjeeling and an Assam, you've met Stephen. The Twining family has been in tea since 1706. Stephen is the bit of that 318-year story that's still on camera.

This entry covers who Stephen is, what his actual role is, why a "tenth generation tea taster" is more than a marketing slogan, and where he sits in the constellation of British tea figures.

Who Stephen Twining is

Stephen Twining is the great great great great great great great grandson of Thomas Twining, who founded Twinings on the Strand, London, in 1706. The shop is still there, on the same address, with the same lion and Chinese figures sign over the door. Stephen has been with the family business for over 30 years; his current role is "Director of Corporate Relations" but his real job is being the public face of the brand and travelling the world tasting tea on behalf of the family.

He has the cravat, the unflappable old school manner, the encyclopedic palate, and the real 318-year family story to back it up. When he tastes a tea on camera, you're watching someone whose family has been doing this longer than the United States has existed.

What "tenth generation" actually means

Most heritage brand spokespeople are professional communicators with a script. Stephen is truly the tenth generation taster, he learned tea at his father Sam Twining's elbow in the 1980s, can recognise origins by smell, and routinely picks the year's blends for one of the world's most recognised tea brands. The cravat is real. The palate is real. The story is real.

His father Sam Twining (ninth generation, OBE, retired in his 80s) is also still occasionally seen in Twinings content. Between the two of them, the Twining family has been the public face of British tea for the better

part of a century.

Why he matters

- **He represents continuity.** Most British heritage brands had their founding family disappear into corporate ownership decades ago. Twinings is owned by ABF (Associated British Foods) but a Twining is still on the tasting team. That's unusual and meaningful.
- **The royal warrants.** Twinings holds the royal warrant for tea, the King's official tea supplier, granted in 1837 and renewed continuously since. Stephen is the public custodian of that.
- **The history is genuinely interesting.** Twinings invented the tea bag as marketing vehicle in the 19th century, originated mass market Earl Grey in the 1830s, and has been at the centre of British tea retail since before there was a British tea retail industry. Stephen tells the story well.
- **The tasting credentials are real.** He's not just doing PR. When Twinings buys leaf, he's part of the team tasting it. The brand wouldn't trot him out if his palate wasn't there.

What to watch or read

- **BBC documentaries on British tea** Stephen has appeared in several. Search "Stephen Twining BBC" for the journalistic profiles.
- **Twinings own YouTube content:** the brand publishes tasting videos and origin pieces with Stephen presenting. It's brand content, but he's good in front of a camera.
- **The Twinings Strand shop visit** if you're in London, the original 1706 shop on the Strand is open, free, and has a small museum at the back. Stephen sometimes makes appearances; the staff can tell you when.
- **Sam Twining's books** Stephen's father wrote "My Cup of Tea" (memoir meets tea history) and several other titles. They're charming, dated in the best way, and a window into Twinings family tradition.

The verdict on Stephen

Stephen Twining is to British tea what a master sommelier is to British wine, the credentialed face of a long tradition, capable of more depth than the marketing reel ever asks for. The Twinings brand could trot out a marketing person; instead they have a real Twining who actually tastes the tea. That's worth respecting.

Compared to the new wave of British tea figures (Don Mei at Mei Leaf, Henrietta Lovell at Rare Tea Co), Stephen represents heritage rather than insurgency. Mei Leaf and Rare Tea Co are reinventing how British people relate to tea; Stephen is preserving what was there before. Both ends are valuable. The wider British tea ecosystem needs both.

Where Twinings fits in our catalogue

Twinings is one of our most stocked brands; we carry their full English Breakfast, Earl Grey, Lady Grey, Pure Green, and a wide flavoured range. See the Twinings brand page for the full range we list, the Twinings story for the brand history, and any of our Earl Grey or English Breakfast wiki entries for the cup level context.

If you're British and over 30, you've drunk Twinings tea sourced under Stephen's watch. The next time you brew an English Breakfast, that's the family business he represents.

For the wider context see the Henrietta Lovell overview, the Don Mei / Mei Leaf overview, the black tea overview, the British tea culture overview, the afternoon tea tradition overview, the Twinings deep dive, and the Twinings brand page.

What you need to know: Stephen Twining, tenth generation

Field	Detail
Best known for	Tenth generation Twining, head of corporate relations, public face of the brand since 1980s
Brand context	Twinings, founded 1706 on the Strand, holder of the world's oldest unchanged company logo
Style	Heritage-led, broadcast media friendly, brand-ambassador framing
UK relevance	Most-recognised face of mainstream British tea; brand reaches every UK supermarket

Why he matters to a UK drinker

Stephen Twining is the rare tea industry figure who is genuinely a tenth-generation family operator rather than a marketing-department invention. The brand sits in every UK supermarket, every hotel breakfast tray, and every TV-show set decoration, and his public appearances are the explicit human face of that footprint. The role is more brand than blending today, but the family connection is real, and the Twinings of London narrative he carries is one of the few unbroken stories in British tea.

For a serious drinker, follow him for the heritage angle, then buy your everyday Earl Grey from whoever blends the best one. Twinings' Earl Grey is the historic recipe; specialist independents often have richer bergamot oils on smaller blends. Both have their place on the British tea shelf.

What to taste alongside

Stephen Twining is the public face of the world's oldest still-trading tea brand. Tasting the catalogue is the easiest introduction: Twinings English Breakfast as the everyday benchmark, Twinings Earl Grey as the brand's signature bergamot blend, and Twinings Lady Grey for the lighter citrus variation. Brew them all properly (3 to 4 minutes in just-off-boil water) and the brand house style across the range becomes obvious.

For everyday teas relevant to this topic: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Have a wander through the tea range; UK delivery is on the house above £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · The infusion is more important than the shop. A short careful brew can lift a budget bag past a careless premium one.

How the role evolved

Stephen Twining's position is not blender-in-chief or buyer-in-chief; the modern Twinings business has separate teams of master blenders working in Andover and Hampshire and the buying happens at the parent (Associated British Foods) level. His role, head of corporate relations and brand ambassador, is the public-facing layer above all of that. He presents the history, leads factory tours, hosts royal-warrant audiences, and signs the visitors' book in the Strand shop founded by his ancestor Thomas Twining in 1706.

That public-facing scope is exactly why he matters to drinkers who want to understand how a 320-year-old brand keeps itself current. Twinings has reinvented itself repeatedly, from the original Strand coffee-house diversification into tea, through the Victorian export boom, the Twinings Strand shop being granted its first royal warrant in 1837, the move into teabags in the 1950s, the global Earl Grey rollout in the 1970s, the recent pivot to "Twinings of London" branding for the modern wellness, fruit and herbal tea range. The continuity is the family name; the catalogue underneath has been refreshed century by century, and Stephen Twining is the human visible thread.

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