Twinings: History and Classic Blends

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Twinings, in brief:** Twinings, founded 1706 on the Strand, is the world's oldest continuously-trading tea brand. Ownership history, ranges worth knowing and what to skip.

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Twinings is the world's oldest continuously operating tea brand, founded in 1706 by Thomas Twining at the same Strand address in London where the original Twinings shop still trades today. Over 300 years of tea blending experience has produced one of the broadest tea ranges on any British shelf, covering black, green, white, oolong, herbal, fruit, decaf, wellness, and specialty teas across multiple grades and styles. Twinings is also the brand most associated with the British classic blends: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, Lady Grey, Lapsang Souchong, Russian Caravan, Prince of Wales.

This guide is a deep dive into Twinings: the 300-year history, the breadth of the range, the famous classic blends, the wellness and herbal expansion, the Royal Warrants, and how to navigate one of the most comprehensive tea catalogues in British retail.

The Twinings history

Twinings was founded by Thomas Twining in 1706 when he bought Tom's Coffee House at 216 Strand in London and converted it into one of the first tea shops in Britain. At the time tea was an expensive luxury item, primarily consumed by the wealthy, and Twining's shop became one of the meeting places for London's elite tea drinkers.

The Twining family has run the business continuously since 1706, making it one of the oldest family businesses in the world. The original Strand shop has been in continuous operation since 1706, surviving the Great Fire's aftermath, two World Wars, multiple recessions, and 300+ years of changing tea preferences. The shop is open today and is one of the few genuinely continuous historical retail destinations in London.

Notable historical milestones:

- **1706** Thomas Twining opens Tom's Coffee House on the Strand
- **1717:** the shop becomes Britain's first tea shop dedicated to women (previously coffee houses had been male only)

- **1837** Twinings receives its first Royal Warrant from Queen Victoria; the brand has held continuous Royal Warrants ever since
- **1933:** the company is acquired by Associated British Foods, where it remains today as part of the ABF tea division
- **1981** English Breakfast Tea is launched, becoming one of the brand's defining products
- **2000s onwards:** major expansion into herbal, wellness, fruit, and specialty tea categories

For more on Twinings' classic blends see the Earl Grey overview and the English Breakfast vs Irish Breakfast comparison.

The Royal Warrants

Twinings has held Royal Warrants from the British Royal Family continuously since 1837. The brand currently holds Royal Warrants from King Charles III (granted in his prior role as Prince of Wales and continued under his reign). The Royal Warrant is displayed on Twinings packaging and is part of the brand's heritage positioning.

The Royal Warrant requires the holder to supply goods or services to the Royal Household for at least 5 years; warrants are renewed periodically based on continued supply. Twinings' continuous warrant for nearly 200 years reflects the brand's consistent quality and the Royal Household's preference for the Twinings range.

Practically, the Royal Warrant is largely a heritage marker rather than a quality indicator; many excellent UK food and drink brands don't hold warrants, and warrants don't guarantee superiority. But for Twinings, the warrant is part of the brand identity and a genuine reflection of the long term Royal patronage of British tea.

The Twinings classic blends

Twinings is the brand most associated with the British classic blend tradition. The defining classics:

Twinings English Breakfast, the supermarket shelf English Breakfast benchmark. Multi origin blend designed for the milk and substantial meal morning ritual. Robust, malty, balanced. The 50-bag and 100-bag boxes are standard.

Twinings Earl Grey, the most recognised Earl Grey in British retail. Black tea base flavoured with bergamot oil; the cup that defines the British Earl Grey tradition. Available in original, decaf, and various intensity variants.

Twinings Lady Grey, the brand's 1990s lighter alternative to Earl Grey. Black tea base with bergamot oil plus Seville orange peel and lemon peel. A Twinings registered trademark; not available from other brands. See the Earl Grey vs Lady Grey comparison.

Twinings Irish Breakfast, the heavier, maltier Assam led morning blend; stronger than English Breakfast and more milk friendly.

Twinings Lapsang Souchong, the smoke dried Chinese black tea with the distinctive pine smoke aroma. Polarising flavour; loved by some, found medicinal by others. One of the few mass market brands carrying this specialty.

Twinings Russian Caravan, a traditional blend of Chinese black teas with subtle smokiness, less intense than Lapsang Souchong; named for the historic camel caravan tea trade between China and Russia.

Twinings Prince of Wales, a delicate Chinese tea blend created in the 1920s with the patronage of the then Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII). Sweet, light, and aromatic.

Twinings Darjeeling, the brand's single origin Darjeeling option, the famous "champagne of teas" with muscatel notes and refined character.

The herbal and wellness expansion

Twinings has expanded significantly into herbal, fruit, and wellness teas over the last 25 years. The current range covers:

- **Pure herbal infusions:** peppermint, chamomile, fennel, ginger, lemon balm, rooibos, and similar single ingredient options
- **Fruit infusions:** berry blends, apple and cinnamon, lemon and ginger, strawberry and mango, and many other fruit blend variants
- **Wellness blends** "Sleep" and "Calm" and "Defence" wellness coded blends targeting specific occasions
- **Superblends:** premium positioned wellness blends combining traditional herbs with botanicals like turmeric, ginger, ginseng
- **Cold infusions:** fruit and herbal blends specifically designed for cold water brewing in summer

The herbal expansion has been commercially successful; Twinings now competes directly with Pukka, Clipper, and other herbal focused brands across the wellness category. The breadth of range is one of Twinings' competitive advantages; few competitors offer the same one stop coverage.

For the herbal categories see the herbal tea overview and chamomile overview.

The decaf range

Twinings has one of the broader decaf ranges in British retail, covering:

- Twinings Decaf English Breakfast
- Twinings Decaf Earl Grey
- Twinings Decaf Pure Green Tea
- Various decaf flavoured variants

The decaffeination is typically CO2-process for premium products; mass market lines may use other methods. For drinkers wanting the Twinings range without the caffeine impact, the decaf options preserve most of the cup character. See the decaf vs caffeine free comparison.

The Twinings shop on the Strand

The original 1706 shop at 216 Strand in London is one of the most historic continuously operating retail locations in Britain. The shop has expanded over the centuries (it now occupies several adjoining buildings) and includes a small museum, a tasting bar, and the full Twinings range plus exclusive specialist teas not

available in supermarket retail.

For tea enthusiasts visiting London, the Strand shop is a worthwhile pilgrimage. The staff are knowledgeable, the tasting bar offers the chance to try unusual blends before buying, and the historical context is genuine. The shop is open Monday to Saturday and is a few minutes' walk from Temple, Charing Cross, and Covent Garden.

The Twinings ethical sourcing position

Twinings carries Rainforest Alliance certification across most of its range and operates the "Twinings Sourced With Care" programme, which provides additional support to tea growing communities through community development projects, women's empowerment initiatives, and agricultural training.

The brand's ethical credentials are solid and broadly comparable to other major mass market tea brands. The corporate ownership (Associated British Foods) provides scale that allows for meaningful sourcing programmes; the family heritage provides continuity of approach.

Twinings vs the competition

Twinings sits in a slightly different competitive position from Yorkshire, PG, and Tetley. While those brands compete primarily in the everyday British black tea category, Twinings competes across the much broader specialty, herbal, and classic blend space. The brand's main competitors vary by category:

- **Black tea classics:** competes with Yorkshire (heavier blends), Fortnum & Mason (more premium positioning), and Whittard (specialty focus)
- **Earl Grey and Lady Grey:** broadly dominant in the British market for these styles
- **Herbal and wellness:** competes with Pukka (organic positioning), Clipper (mass market organic), Yogi (American style wellness)
- **Specialty teas (Lapsang, Darjeeling, Russian Caravan)** sits proudly alongside friends like Whittard, Fortnum & Mason and other specialty importers

Twinings' competitive advantage is the breadth of range under one trusted brand; it's the brand most likely to have whatever you want in stock. The disadvantage is that no individual product is universally regarded as the category leader; Yorkshire is better for everyday black tea, Pukka is better for organic herbal, Teapigs is better for whole leaf premium, and so on. Twinings is the breadth of range generalist rather than the category specific specialist.

How to navigate the Twinings range

The Twinings range is enormous and can be overwhelming for new buyers. A simple navigation approach:

- **Daily breakfast cup** Twinings English Breakfast or Twinings Irish Breakfast for stronger
- **Bergamot citrus tea** Twinings Earl Grey, with Lady Grey as the lighter alternative
- **Afternoon green tea** Twinings Pure Green Tea or one of the green tea blends
- **Specialty Chinese tea** Twinings Lapsang Souchong or Russian Caravan or Prince of Wales
- **Single origin specialty** Twinings Darjeeling

- **Herbal infusion:** single ingredient (Pure Peppermint, Pure Camomile) or wellness blend
- **Decaf option** look for the decaf variant of any Twinings tea you currently drink

For the most popular Twinings products see the product picks below.

What we stock

Browse the full Twinings range. The most bought Twinings products on teas.co.uk:

- Twinings Bioblends Lemon, Ginger and Turmeric, 18 Tea Bags 40g
- Twinings Scotland's Ceylon Tea (International Blend), 20 Tea Bags 40g
- Twinings Darjeeling Tea (International Blend), 25 Tea Bags 50g
- Twinings Lemon & Ginger, 80 Tea Bags 120g
- Twinings Pause, 20 Tea Bags 36g
- Twinings Vanilla Flavoured Black Tea (International Blend), 20 Tea Bags 32g

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

The verdict on Twinings

Twinings is the breadth of range specialist among British tea brands. The 300-year heritage is genuine; the Royal Warrants are real; the classic blends (English Breakfast, Earl Grey, Lady Grey) are well made versions of British tea standards. The expansion into herbal, wellness, and specialty tea has been commercially successful and gives Twinings the broadest single brand range on most British shelves.

For drinkers who want a one stop tea brand that covers virtually every category at decent quality, Twinings is the obvious choice. For drinkers who want the best in any specific category, the answer is usually a more specialised brand: Yorkshire for everyday black tea, Pukka for organic herbal, Teapigs for whole leaf premium, specialist importers for high end specialty teas.

The brand isn't trying to win on category specific superiority; it's winning on heritage, range breadth, and the reliability that comes from 300 years of continuous family business tea blending. That's a defensible position and explains why Twinings has remained one of the top British tea brands for centuries while many competitors have come and gone.

For the wider context see the black tea overview, the green tea overview, the herbal tea overview, the Earl Grey overview, the Earl Grey vs Lady Grey comparison, the English Breakfast vs Irish Breakfast comparison , the Yorkshire Tea history, the PG Tips deep dive, and the decaf vs caffeine free comparison.

The essentials: Twinings

Field	Detail
Founded	1706 by Thomas Twining on the Strand, London (oldest still-trading tea brand)
Owner	Associated British Foods (since 1964)
Signature blends	English Breakfast, Earl Grey, Lady Grey, Lapsang Souchong, Prince of Wales

Field	Detail
Royal warrant	Held continuously since 1837 (Queen Victoria onwards)
Range	Mainstream black, herbal, fruit, wellness; premium leaf via Twinings' specialist range

What to buy now

The Twinings catalogue is broad. For the historic core, start with Twinings English Breakfast, the brand's benchmark Ceylon-Keemun blend. Twinings Earl Grey is the world's most-recognised bergamot black tea. Tea-bag drinkers who want better leaf can move to the Twinings loose-leaf range. Specialist comparison: try a premium independent Earl Grey alongside Twinings' version, the higher-quality bergamot oils tell a story about why the same blend name can taste very different.

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- Twinings Pure Peppermint
- Twinings Quiet Mind
- Twinings Raspberry and Lemon
- Twinings Revitalise
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Current Twinings brand comparisons

Twinings is difficult to judge as a single cup because its range is unusually broad. Compare that breadth with three everyday British names: Yorkshire Tea vs Twinings, PG Tips vs Twinings and Tetley vs Twinings. Each guide uses live shop examples and separates bulk black tea from specialist green and herbal choices.

New Twinings buying guides

These practical comparisons use current products from the teas.co.uk shop and record the catalogue review date.

- Twinings Wellness Blends Compared
- Twinings Green Tea Range Compared
- Best Darjeeling Tea Bags UK
- Best White Tea Bags UK

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