Teapigs: Tea Temples and Whole Leaf Range

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Teapigs, in brief:** Teapigs is the UK premium pyramid-bag brand: whole-leaf, warmly marketed, Tata-owned since 2017. Which temples justify the price and which are just packaging.

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

Teapigs is the British premium whole leaf tea brand that built its identity around the proposition that supermarket tea was getting worse and someone needed to bring proper quality tea back to mainstream British shelves. Founded in London in 2006 by Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle (both ex Tetley), the brand pioneered the pyramid "tea temple" format for whole leaf teas in single cup brewing, built a comprehensive range across true tea and herbal categories, and earned a strong following in the premium tea segment. Teapigs is now owned by Tata Consumer Products (acquired in 2013) but has retained its distinct brand voice and product approach.

This guide is a deep dive into Teapigs: the founding story, the tea temple format innovation, the comprehensive premium range, the brand voice and approach, and how to navigate one of the strongest premium tier tea catalogues in British retail.

The Teapigs history

Teapigs was founded in 2006 by Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle, two former Tetley employees who shared a frustration with the declining quality of mass market British tea bags. The founding insight was that British tea consumers were drinking small leaf cut tea in flat bags because that was what supermarkets stocked, not because it was what produced the best cup. The Teapigs proposition was: bring whole leaf tea back to single cup brewing through a 3D pyramid format, charge premium prices that reflected the cost of better leaf, and build a brand voice that made premium tea approachable rather than intimidating.

The brand grew rapidly through the late 2000s and 2010s, securing distribution in major UK supermarkets, building a substantial direct to consumer business through teapigs.co.uk, and expanding internationally to several European markets. The brand's distinctive packaging (the cartoon "tea pig" character on each box) and irreverent brand voice helped it stand out in a category dominated by either heritage driven traditional brands or wellness coded organic positioning.

Notable milestones in the brand's history:

- **2006:** founded in London by Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle
- **2007 onwards:** gradual supermarket distribution expansion
- **2013:** acquired by Tata Consumer Products (the same company that owns Tetley)
- **2010s:** broad UK supermarket presence and international expansion
- **Continues** to operate as a distinct brand within the Tata portfolio with retained product approach and brand voice

The Tata acquisition is interesting given that Tata also owns Tetley; the two brands operate at different price points and target different consumer segments, with Teapigs at the premium end and Tetley at the value tier mainstream end. The same parent company runs both without significant range overlap.

The tea temple format

Teapigs' signature product innovation: the pyramid "tea temple", a 3D bag format designed specifically to give whole leaf tea (and whole piece herbal ingredients) room to expand and circulate during brewing. The tea temple format addresses the structural problem with traditional flat tea bags: small cut tea is required because whole leaves can't expand properly in a flat space, but small cut tea produces a thinner, more astringent cup than whole leaf brewing.

The tea temple's actual cup quality benefit is real and measurable:

- **Whole leaf tea unfurls properly:** releasing fuller flavour than cut tea can
- **Larger pieces of herbal ingredients** (whole peppermint leaves, larger chamomile flowers, visible spice pieces) infuse better than ground equivalents
- **The 3D shape gives water full leaf circulation room:** for proper extraction
- **The visible whole leaf format:** provides the visual quality cue that consumers can see in the cup

Tea temples are more expensive to produce than flat bags (the format requires specific machinery and uses more bag material), which is part of why Teapigs prices are higher than flat bag competitors. The premium is largely justified by the cup quality difference; whether it's worth paying depends on how much you care about your daily cup.

The tea temple format isn't unique to Teapigs (PG Tips' pyramid bags use a similar 3D format, as do various other brands), but Teapigs uses the format with better quality leaf inside, which is what makes the difference. A pyramid bag with cut tea inside is just a fancier flat bag experience; a pyramid bag with whole leaf tea inside is a meaningful step up.

The Teapigs range, category by category

Teapigs has built one of the broader premium tea ranges in British retail. Major categories:

Black tea:

- **Everyday Brew:** the brand's flagship daily black tea, whole leaf English breakfast style
- **English Breakfast:** the classic morning blend
- **Earl Grey Strong** bergamot flavoured with stronger character than supermarket Earl Grey

- **Darjeeling Earl Grey** premium variant using Darjeeling leaf base
- **Decaf Tea:** the decaf version of the standard blend
- **Chai Tea:** whole spice premium chai blend

Green tea:

- **Mao Feng Green Tea:** the brand's flagship green tea, whole leaf Chinese mao feng
- **Jasmine Pearls:** hand rolled Chinese green tea pearls scented with jasmine
- **Matcha:** premium ceremonial grade matcha powder in tin format
- **Sencha** Japanese style sencha green tea

White tea and oolong:

- **White Tea:** premium silver needle style white tea
- **Oolong Tea:** traditional Chinese oolong

Herbal and fruit infusions:

- **Peppermint Leaves:** whole peppermint leaves in tea temples
- **Chamomile Flowers:** whole chamomile flowers (as the name implies)
- **Liquorice and Peppermint:** combined sweet and fresh blend
- **Honeybush and Rooibos** South African red bush blend
- **Super Fruit:** berry and fruit blend
- **Lemon and Ginger:** classic warming infusion

Specialty and seasonal:

- **Popcorn Tea (Genmaicha)** Japanese green tea with toasted brown rice; one of the brand's distinctive offerings
- **Chocolate Flake Tea:** black tea with cocoa nibs; a slightly indulgent crossover product
- **Various seasonal limited editions:** rotating in and out of the range

For the wider category context see the black tea overview, the green tea overview, the white tea overview, and the oolong overview.

The Teapigs brand voice

One of Teapigs' competitive advantages: a distinctive brand voice that makes premium tea approachable rather than intimidating. The voice is:

- **Irreverent and slightly self deprecating:** the brand doesn't take itself too seriously
- **Educational without being preachy:** the packaging and website explain tea origins and brewing without lecturing
- **Quality focused without snobbery:** premium positioning without alienating mainstream drinkers
- **Visually distinctive:** the cartoon "tea pig" character provides a friendly visual identity

- **Direct and plain about products:** clear descriptions of what each tea is and where it's from

The brand voice contrasts with the more wellness coded Pukka approach, the heritage coded Twinings approach, and the value coded Tetley approach. Teapigs occupies a distinct position as the approachable premium quality brand, which has earned it strong loyalty among drinkers who want better tea without the wellness or heritage messaging layers.

The Teapigs ethical sourcing position

Teapigs has built credible ethical sourcing credentials, with active sustainability programmes covering:

- **Direct relationships with tea estates:** particularly in Sri Lanka and India where many of the teas are sourced
- **Tea Promoters India partnership:** the brand's long standing relationship with the Indian tea supply organisation that channels investment into grower communities
- **Recyclable tea temple materials:** the brand transitioned to fully recyclable bag materials before many competitors
- **Carbon neutral operations** including offsetting programmes for shipping and manufacturing
- **B Corp certification:** granted to Teapigs in recognition of its broader sustainability framework

The ethical credentials are solid and broadly comparable to Pukka in scope, though Teapigs doesn't have the same comprehensive organic certification across the range. Some Teapigs products are organic certified; many are not. The brand prioritises whole leaf quality and direct trade relationships over universal organic positioning.

Teapigs vs the competition

Teapigs competes across multiple categories, each with distinct competitive dynamics:

- **vs Pukka** Teapigs is the whole leaf tea and quality brand; Pukka is the organic herbal wellness brand. They overlap in the herbal category but largely don't compete head to head. See the Pukka vs Teapigs comparison.
- **vs Twinings** Teapigs has fewer SKUs but better whole leaf quality at the premium end; Twinings has heritage and breadth but more conventional bag formats
- **vs Yorkshire Gold** Teapigs Everyday Brew competes directly as a premium everyday black tea; both are excellent, with Teapigs slightly more whole leaf focused and Yorkshire Gold slightly more traditional
- **vs Whittard, Fortnum & Mason, and other premium specialty brands** Teapigs competes in the specialty tea space with similar quality but broader supermarket distribution
- **vs Tetley (same parent company)** Teapigs is the premium positioning; Tetley is the value tier mainstream. The two brands serve different consumer segments without internal cannibalisation

Teapigs' competitive position is strongest as the premium whole leaf tea brand with broad supermarket distribution. For drinkers who want a step up from supermarket tea but don't want the wellness branding of Pukka or the heritage messaging of Twinings, Teapigs is the natural choice.

How to brew Teapigs properly

Teapigs tea temples are designed for full whole leaf extraction. The brand's brewing recommendations vary by tea type:

- **Black teas:** just off boiling water (95 to 100°C), 3 to 4 minutes for whole leaf English Breakfast styles
- **Green teas:** cooled water (70 to 80°C), 2 to 3 minutes; boiling water destroys delicate green tea
- **White teas:** even cooler water (75°C), 5 to 7 minutes
- **Oolong teas** 90°C water, 3 to 5 minutes
- **Herbal infusions:** just off boiling water, 5 to 10 minutes for full extraction
- **Matcha:** whisked rather than steeped; see the matcha overview for the proper method

The whole leaf format means the tea bag actually visibly expands in your cup as the leaves unfurl; this is the visual cue that you're getting the full whole leaf brewing experience. For the family by family brewing temperature detail see the water temperatures guide.

What we stock

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

- Teapigs Chocolate and Mint, 15 Tea Bags 37.5g
- Teapigs Decaf English Breakfast, 15 Tea Bags 50g
- Teapigs Yerba Mate, 15 Tea Bags 37.5g
- Teapigs Chamomile Flowers, 50 Tea Bags 75g
- Teapigs Lemon and Ginger, 15 Tea Bags 37.5g
- Teapigs Mao Feng Green Tea, 15 Tea Bags 37.5g

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

The verdict on Teapigs

Teapigs is the British premium whole leaf tea brand. The combination of tea temple format, whole leaf quality, broad range coverage, distinctive brand voice, and credible sustainability programmes makes it one of the strongest brands in the premium tea segment. The price premium over supermarket tier brands is genuinely justified by the cup quality difference; whether it's worth paying depends on how much you care about your daily cup.

For drinkers who want a step up from supermarket tea bags without the wellness branding of Pukka or the heritage messaging of Twinings, Teapigs is the natural default. For drinkers who want the cheapest possible decent tea, Tetley is the right answer; for drinkers who want the heaviest cup character, Yorkshire is the right answer; for drinkers who want the broadest single brand range, Twinings is the right answer. Teapigs occupies the "premium quality with personality" position and does it well.

The Tata ownership has been notably hands off in maintaining Teapigs' distinct brand identity, which is a credit to both the brand team and the parent company. Long term observers should continue to watch for any drift, but the practical evidence so far is that Teapigs has retained its core proposition through the

corporate ownership era.

For the wider context see the black tea overview, the green tea overview, the matcha overview, the Pukka vs Teapigs comparison, the Yorkshire Tea story, the Twinings 1706 to today, the Tetley deep dive, and the Pukka deep dive.

In short: Teapigs

Field	Detail
Founded	2006 by ex-Tetley colleagues Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle
Owner	Tata Consumer Products (acquired 2017)
Signature format	Whole-leaf pyramid "tea temple" teabags (premium UK pricing)
Range	English Breakfast, Earl Grey, Mao Feng green, Chai, Fennel & Liquorice, Super Fruit, Matcha
UK relevance	The supermarket-aisle bridge between mass teabags and specialist loose leaf

What to buy now

If you are upgrading from supermarket teabags but not ready for loose leaf, Teapigs is the obvious next step. Try Teapigs English Breakfast for the everyday upgrade, Teapigs Earl Grey for a brighter bergamot, and Teapigs Chai for the spice blend. To learn the next step, brew Teapigs alongside a quality loose-leaf equivalent in a teapot, the leaf-quality difference is audible.

Reference

- PubMed: Green tea catechins and human health

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teas · Match the tea to the moment. A 6am cup and a 4pm cup do not need to be the same brew.

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- Green tea
- Black tea
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New Teapigs buying guides

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

- Teapigs Everyday Brew vs Yorkshire Tea
- Best Darjeeling Tea Bags UK
- Best White Tea Bags UK

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