

Clipper

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Clipper, in brief: Clipper: the 1984 Dorset organic and Fairtrade pioneer, UK Fairtrade tea first, unbleached plastic free bags, broad affordable organic range, Pukka.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for clipper deep dive, or "Best Tea Shops in the UK". Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/>*

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

Clipper is the British organic and Fairtrade tea pioneer that proved organic and ethical positioning could work at mainstream supermarket prices. Founded in Beaminster, Dorset in 1984 by Mike and Lorraine Brehme, the brand was the first to launch certified Fairtrade tea in the UK in 1994 and one of the first to commit to comprehensive organic certification across its mass market range. Clipper has built one of the broadest [organic tea](#) ranges in British retail at price points significantly below Pukka and other premium organic competitors, occupying the affordable organic position in the category.

This guide is a deep dive into Clipper: the founding ethical trade story, the comprehensive organic and Fairtrade range, the unbleached bag innovation, the Royal London ownership era, and how to navigate one of the most comprehensive affordable organic tea catalogues in British retail.

The Clipper history

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The Clipper history, Clipper. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/>*

Clipper was founded in 1984 by Mike and Lorraine Brehme in Beaminster, Dorset. The founders had backgrounds in the wholefood and organic food industry and identified a gap in the British tea market for ethically sourced, organic leaning teas at accessible price points. The brand grew slowly through the 1980s and 1990s before accelerating through the 2000s as organic and Fairtrade became more mainstream consumer concerns.

Notable milestones in the brand's history:

- **1984** founded in Beaminster, Dorset by Mike and Lorraine Brehme
- **1994** launched the UK's first certified Fairtrade tea, a market first that established Clipper's ethical positioning

- **1999** launched the UK's first organic tea bags in mainstream supermarket retail
- **2010** transitioned to unbleached, plastic free tea bags across the range, becoming one of the first major brands to address the tea bag plastic problem
- **2012** acquired by Royal London Mutual Insurance Society as part of its sustainable investments strategy
- **Continues** to operate with strong organic and Fairtrade positioning, broad supermarket distribution, and the founding ethical commitments

The Royal London ownership is unusual in the tea industry, where most brands are owned by either FMCG conglomerates or family businesses. Royal London is a UK mutual insurance society that holds Clipper as a long term sustainable investment; the ownership has been notably hands off in maintaining Clipper's mission driven positioning, which has provided stability through the 2010s and 2020s.

The Fairtrade pioneer position

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The Fairtrade pioneer position, Clipper. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/>*

Clipper's 1994 launch of certified Fairtrade tea was a market first that established the brand's ethical positioning credentials. At the time Fairtrade was a relatively niche concept in mainstream British retail; Clipper's commitment helped bring Fairtrade into supermarket distribution and demonstrated that ethical sourcing could work as a brand differentiator at mass market prices.

The Fairtrade certification covers tea sourced from certified Fairtrade producer organisations, with guaranteed minimum prices, additional Fairtrade Premium payments to producer communities, and adherence to Fairtrade labour and environmental standards. For consumers who specifically prioritise Fairtrade in their purchasing, Clipper has been one of the most consistent options available across decades.

Most of Clipper's main range carries Fairtrade certification. The brand's commitment to Fairtrade has continued through ownership transitions and has been part of what consumers value about the brand alongside the organic positioning.

The organic leaning range

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The organic leaning range, Clipper. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/>*

Clipper offers comprehensive organic certification across most of its range, though not as universally as Pukka. The brand's positioning is "organic and ethical at affordable prices" rather than "organic only premium". This has practical implications:

- **Most Clipper teas are organic** including the flagship Everyday Tea, the [green tea](#) range, the rooibos range, and most of the herbal blends
- **Some Clipper products are not organic** particularly some of the older heritage products and some specialty blends

- **The pricing is meaningfully lower than Pukka** typically 20 to 30 percent cheaper for comparable organic certifications
- **The supermarket distribution is broader** including the major UK chains and independent wholefood retailers

For drinkers who want comprehensive organic certification and don't mind paying premium prices, Pukka is the obvious choice. For drinkers who want organic certification at lower prices and broader range coverage, Clipper is the natural alternative. Many households happily keep both brands.

The unbleached, plastic free tea bag

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The unbleached, plastic free tea bag, Clipper. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/>*

Clipper transitioned to unbleached, plastic free tea bags across its range starting in 2010, well ahead of most major UK competitors. The transition addressed two related concerns:

- **Bleached tea bags** traditional [white tea](#) bags use chlorine bleaching to achieve their colour; unbleached bags are naturally tan/brown and avoid the bleaching chemicals
- **Plastic in tea bags** traditional tea bags use polypropylene to seal the bag edges, which doesn't compost; Clipper's plant based bag materials are fully compostable

Both concerns became more visible to mainstream consumers in the late 2010s, particularly the plastic in bags issue that prompted the high profile PG Tips controversy in 2018. Clipper's early commitment to unbleached, plant based bags meant the brand was already well positioned when the consumer pressure emerged.

The unbleached, plastic free bags are now standard across the Clipper range and form part of the brand's broader [sustainability](#) positioning. The bags have a slightly different visual appearance than conventional bleached bags (more tan coloured, slightly less rigid) but produce identical cups.

The Clipper range, category by category

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The Clipper range, category by category, Clipper. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/>*

Everyday [black tea](#):

- **Clipper Organic Fairtrade Everyday Tea** the flagship daily black tea, organic and Fairtrade certified
- **Clipper Organic Decaf Everyday Tea** the decaf version, the same daily blend with caffeine removed
- **Clipper English Breakfast and Earl Grey** the classic British blends in organic versions

Green tea:

- **Clipper Organic Pure Green Tea** plain green tea in organic format
- **Various flavoured green tea blends** lemon, mint, mango, matcha blended versions

Rooibos and red bush:

- **Clipper Organic Pure Rooibos** the standard plain rooibos, organic certified
- **Various flavoured rooibos blends** vanilla, caramel, and similar

Herbal infusions:

- **Single ingredient herbals** peppermint, chamomile, fennel, ginger, lemon and ginger
- **Wellness blends** Snore & Peace (sleep blend), Sleep Easy (alternative sleep formulation), various functional blends
- **Fruit infusions** berry blends, citrus blends

Specialty:

- **Clipper Lemon & Ginger** the warming citrus and ginger blend that's one of Clipper's most popular wellness blends
- **Various seasonal blends** rotating in and out of the range

The range is broad enough to cover most household tea needs from a single brand at organic and Fairtrade pricing. For the wider context see the [black tea overview](#), the [green tea overview](#), the [rooibos overview](#), and the [herbal tea overview](#).

The Clipper price advantage in organic

Clipper's competitive position is specifically as the affordable organic brand. Comparison with the main premium organic competitor:

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Product type	Clipper price (approx)	Pukka price (approx)	Clipper saving
Organic everyday black tea (80 bags)	£3.50 to £4.50	Not directly comparable (Pukka doesn't make this category)	Clipper exclusive position
Organic peppermint (20 bags)	£1.80 to £2.50	£2.50 to £3.50	30 to 40 percent
Organic chamomile (20 bags)	£1.80 to £2.50	£2.50 to £3.50	30 to 40 percent
Organic green tea (20 bags)	£2 to £3	£3 to £4	25 to 35 percent

For drinkers building an organic tea cupboard on a budget, the Clipper price advantage is meaningful. For drinkers who specifically value the Pukka brand positioning, Ayurvedic philosophy, or B Corp credentials, the premium pricing is justified. Both brands deliver organic certified products with credible ethical positioning; the choice often comes down to brand personality and budget rather than fundamental product quality.

Clipper vs the competition

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Clipper vs the competition, Clipper. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/*

Clipper's main competitors vary by category:

- **vs Pukka** Clipper is the affordable organic brand; Pukka is the premium organic with Ayurvedic positioning brand. Significant overlap in herbal blends but distinct positioning.
- **vs Heath & Heather** both are affordable organic herbal brands with similar positioning; Clipper has broader supermarket distribution
- **vs Tetley and other mass market brands** Clipper is meaningfully more expensive for everyday black tea but provides organic certification that mass market competitors don't
- **vs supermarket own label organic ranges** Clipper is more expensive but has stronger brand credibility and broader range
- **vs Twinings organic range** Clipper is fully organic focused; Twinings has organic options within a much broader range that includes non organic products

Clipper's competitive position is strongest as the broad range affordable organic and Fairtrade brand for households that prioritise ethical credentials at accessible price points. For drinkers who don't specifically value organic or Fairtrade, mass market brands deliver comparable cup quality at lower prices; for drinkers who specifically value organic, Clipper is the most accessible option in the category.

The Clipper ethical sourcing position

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The Clipper ethical sourcing position, Clipper. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/*

Clipper's ethical credentials are genuinely strong, built on:

- **Fairtrade certification** across most of the range, including the founding 1994 commitment
- **Organic certification** across most of the range
- **Unbleached, plastic free tea bags** across the entire range since 2010
- **Direct trade relationships** with grower communities, building investment in tea growing regions
- **Carbon neutrality programmes** for operations and packaging
- **Sustainable packaging** initiatives across the range

The credentials are broadly comparable to Pukka in scope, though the specific positioning differs. Clipper emphasises Fairtrade and affordability; Pukka emphasises B Corp and Ayurvedic philosophy. Both deliver credible mission driven business in a category where many mass market competitors offer minimal ethical positioning.

How to brew Clipper properly

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for How to brew Clipper properly, Clipper. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/*

Standard tea style brewing applies, varying by tea type:

- **Everyday black tea** just off boiling water, 4 to 5 minutes for full character
- **Green tea** cooled water (70 to 80°C), 2 to 3 minutes
- **Rooibos** just off boiling water, 5 to 7 minutes (rooibos doesn't go bitter with extended brewing)
- **Herbal infusions** just off boiling water, 5 to 10 minutes for full extraction

The unbleached bags don't require any special brewing approach; they perform identically to bleached bags in terms of cup quality. For the family by family brewing temperature detail see the [water temperatures guide](#).

What we stock

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for What we stock, Clipper. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/>*

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

- Clipper Organic Decaf Everyday Tea, the organic decaf workhorse
- Clipper Organic Pure Green Tea, affordable organic green tea
- Clipper Organic Pure Rooibos, the organic rooibos option
- Clipper Organic Snore & Peace, sleep blend with eucalyptus
- Clipper Organic Earl Grey, organic Earl Grey

For comparisons across the wider organic and herbal landscape, see also: [Pukka](#), [Heath & Heather](#), [Dragonfly](#), [Twinings](#), [Teapigs](#).

The verdict on Clipper

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The verdict on Clipper, Clipper. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/>*

Clipper is the British affordable organic and Fairtrade tea brand. The combination of broad range coverage, comprehensive organic and Fairtrade certification, unbleached plastic free bag format, and significantly lower pricing than Pukka makes it one of the strongest brands in the affordable organic segment. The brand's 40-year heritage of ethical positioning provides credibility that newer mission driven brands have to build from scratch.

For drinkers who specifically prioritise organic and Fairtrade in their daily tea purchasing but don't want to pay Pukka premium prices, Clipper is the obvious default. For drinkers who want the more visibly premium positioning and Ayurvedic philosophy of Pukka, the price premium is justified by the brand experience even though the cup quality is broadly comparable.

The Royal London ownership has been notably stable and hands off, allowing Clipper to maintain its founding commitments through the 2010s and 2020s without the disruption that ownership transitions have caused at other brands. The brand currently sits as one of the most trusted affordable ethical options in British tea retail.

For the wider context see the [black tea overview](#), the [green tea overview](#), the [rooibos overview](#), the [herbal tea overview](#), the [decaf vs caffeine free comparison](#), the [Pukka deep dive](#), and the [Teapigs deep dive](#).

Source

- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

FROM THE CURATOR teas · One good loose-leaf in a clean teapot beats five exotic bags drunk in a hurry.

Our shelf picks

Source: [Teas.co.uk](#). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Clipper. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/clipper-deep-dive/>*

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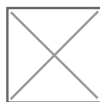
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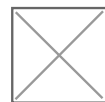
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