The Big Three British Tea Brands

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **British tea Big Three, in summary:** The British tea Big Three compared: Yorkshire, PG Tips and Tetley on flavour, price, market share and brand loyalty, and how to choose between them.

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

The British tea Big Three: Yorkshire Tea, Tetley, PG Tips. Three brands that dominate UK mainstream black tea, collectively roughly 70-80% of the everyday tea market. Each has distinctive character (Yorkshire fuller, Tetley brisk, PG Tips tannic) but all sit in the same mass market workhorse category at 6-8p per cup. Whichever you drink, you're drinking Britain's mainstream tea.

The Big Three

Yorkshire Tea

Launched 1977 by Taylors of Harrogate (Harrogate, Yorkshire). The newest of the Big Three but rapidly became the most loved. Distinctive fuller bodied character. Available in standard, Hard Water, Decaf, and Gold variants. Yorkshire Tea range.

Tetley

Founded 1837 in Huddersfield, Yorkshire. Acquired by Tata Consumer Products in 2000. Extensive product range, black tea, Earl Grey, decaf, herbal, fruit, Cold Infuse and the dessert flavoured teas. Tetley range.

PG Tips

Launched 1930 as "Pre Gestee Tea" (claiming digestive benefits). Pyramid bag innovation 1996. Owned by Lipton/Ekaterra. Distinctive brisk character. PG Tips range.

Comparing flavour

Yorkshire Tea

- Fuller bodied.
- Slightly maltier.

- Smoother.
- Held in higher esteem than the other two by survey.

Tetley

- Brisk.
- Mid bodied.
- Versatile across milk levels.

PG Tips

- Most tannic of the three.
- Strong brewed character.
- Holds up to lots of milk.
- Less malty than Yorkshire.

Comparing pricing

All three are similarly priced:

- 240-bag pack: £8-15 (~6-8p per cup).
- 440-bag pack: ~5-7p per cup.
- 80-bag pack: ~10-12p per cup.

Yorkshire Tea sometimes commands a slight premium due to brand loyalty.

Market share

Approximate UK black tea market share (varies):

- Yorkshire Tea: ~30%.
- Tetley: ~25%.
- PG Tips: ~15-20%.
- All other (Twinings, supermarket own brand, specialty): ~25-30%.

The Big Three dominate; smaller brands compete for the remainder.

Brand loyalty

British tea drinkers tend to be highly loyal to their chosen Big Three brand:

- Yorkshire fans rarely switch to Tetley.
- Tetley drinkers stick with Tetley.
- PG Tips drinkers stick with PG Tips.

The differences are modest in objective tasting; the brand attachment is significant. Childhood/family tradition often determines which becomes the "household tea."

Cultural positioning

Yorkshire Tea

Premium mainstream. Family friendly advertising. Northern English identity. Most loved by surveys.

Tetley

The classic British tea brand. Long heritage. Workplace and household standard.

PG Tips

The chimps' tea (the famous chimpanzee adverts of the 1950s-90s). Brisk, distinctive, the "stronger" brand image.

Variants within the Big Three

Yorkshire Tea variants

- Yorkshire Tea Original.
- Yorkshire Tea Hard Water.
- Yorkshire Tea Gold (premium).
- Yorkshire Tea Decaf.
- Yorkshire Tea Tetley Bedtime Brew (collaboration).

Tetley variants

- Tetley Original (English Breakfast).
- Tetley Extra Strong.
- Tetley One Cup.
- Tetley Seriously Refreshing.
- Tetley Decaf.
- Tetley Earl Grey.
- Tetley's dessert flavoured range.

PG Tips variants

- PG Tips Pyramid Original.
- PG Tips Strong.
- PG Tips Decaf.
- PG Tips Green Tea.
- PG Tips Best Brew.

Choosing between them

Try Yorkshire if

You want a fuller bodied, smoother daily tea.

Try Tetley if

You want a versatile, brisk daily tea with the broadest range of variants.

Try PG Tips if

You want the strongest, most tannic, milk friendly daily tea.

Or blind test all three

The differences are real but subtle. A blind taste test is the only way to know which you actually prefer.

Pot vs single cup brewing

All three brands work for both. Each has single cup variants:

- Yorkshire Tea (no specific "one cup" but standard works).
- Tetley One Cup (specifically engineered).
- PG Tips Pyramid (works for both).

Caffeine

All three have similar caffeine: 40-50mg per cup.

Vegan

All three are pure black tea, vegan when drunk black or with plant milk.

FAQ

Best of the Big Three? Yorkshire Tea by survey, but personal preference dominates.

Caffeine difference? Minimal, all 40-50mg per cup.

Price difference? Minimal, all 6-8p per cup at 240-bag.

Which is strongest? PG Tips by character; Tetley Extra Strong by intensity.

Which is smoothest? Yorkshire Tea.

Curator's note: the Big Three are the spine of British everyday tea. Yorkshire fuller, Tetley brisk, PG Tips tannic. Whichever you drink, you're drinking Britain's mainstream tea. Personal loyalty matters more than objective ranking. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

The Big Three at a glance

Brand	Character	Best for

Yorkshire Tea	Heaviest, Assam led, malty, milk friendly	The strong proper cuppa; the most loved everyday cup
PG Tips	Brisker, Kenya led, brighter, pyramid bag	A sharper morning lift, often with two sugars
Tetley	Softer, rounder, gentler, very milk friendly	An approachable everyday cup for milk forward drinkers

Quick take

The Big Three, Yorkshire, PG Tips and Tetley, are the brands that built the British everyday cup, and the choice between them is preference plus a little brewing, not a quality gap. Yorkshire is the strong, malty, milk friendly default; PG Tips the brisker Kenya led morning lift; Tetley the softer, rounder, approachable cup. Match the strength to how much milk you take, brew it properly at a full boil for three to four minutes, and the right one is simply the cup you reach for again.

> **Stock the everyday tin:** the strong default from Yorkshire Tea, the brisk morning from PG Tips, the softer cup from Tetley. Browse the full British black tea range.

Reference noted

- EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine (2015)

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