



Pioneers of the tea world for 300 years Twinings celebrates its 300th birthday in 2006

Twinings, the world-famous English tea company, is celebrating its 300th anniversary in 2006. Twinings was one of the very first companies to introduce tea drinking to the British when, in 1706, Thomas Twining started selling tea from his newly purchased premises in London. This shop remains to this day as does the opportunity to purchase one of the first teas Thomas ever sold: Gunpowder Green tea.

Now enjoyed in 115 countries, Twinings continues to enjoy the reputation of setting the standard in tea blending and as pioneers in catering to every palate and drinking occasion. When they first hit London society in 1706, Twinings' teas presented a smooth, refreshing alternative to coffee and the ale that most people drank back then from the moment of waking up! Today, Twinings produces nearly 200 different blends for tea drinkers across the world. In fact, if you were today to wrap the string used for Twinings tea bags used in one year around the world at the equator, it would go around more than fifteen times!

Twinings' teas range from contemporary fruit infusions and herbal teas to its most popular blends: English Breakfast and the world-famous Earl Grey, an example of the fine, bespoke tea Twinings was able to blend to individual customer's requirements in the 1830s:

“There is no doubt in my mind that Charles, the second Earl Grey, asked Twinings tea merchants to blend this special tea for him back in the early nineteenth century - resulting in the blend that is so popular today,” says Stephen Twining - a tenth generation member of the famous tea family and world renowned tea expert.

In the early eighteenth century, tea-drinking was for the privileged few. Punitive taxes kept the prices high, and soon Twinings was attracting an aristocratic, even royal, following. Richard Twining recognised the huge potential if only tea could be made more accessible. So it was in 1784 he persuaded the Prime Minister William Pitt to pass the Commutation Act. Prices were slashed, consumption doubled and tea was on its way to becoming the drink of the nation.

“We've always had a simple philosophy at Twinings - to be totally committed to producing the highest quality teas and to make them accessible to everyone,” explains Stephen Twining.

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“Our strength has always been in sourcing and using only the finest ingredients from day one, even back in the eighteenth century when smugglers were undercutting honest tea-suppliers' prices by selling impure teas. Tea was an incredibly prestigious and expensive product but Twinings was never tempted - as others were - to use rogue ingredients to add bulk - the addition of soil wasn't uncommon!”

Right from the beginning Twinings has focused on accessibility and introducing consumers to new, exciting and exotic tea options - from Darjeeling to decaffeinated; from green tea to iced tea. Twinings was honoured in 1837 by Queen Victoria, when she appointed Twinings as the official supplier of teas to her household. Twinings has had the honour of supplying every successive British Monarch to date. What's more, Twinings also holds the world's oldest company logo in continuous use.

“Twinings is totally dedicated to creating new tea-drinking experiences, and enhancing the traditions which are already so well-loved around the world. I think this goes a long way to explain why tea is as popular today as centuries ago when enthusiastic consumers included the renowned eighteenth century author Jane Austen,” says Stephen Twining.

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