

Can tea have its coffee moment?

Monday 7 September, 2026

Family-owned British tea company Birchall has announced plans for a £1 million marketing investment in its first ever TV campaign alongside a series of short films shot in East Africa earlier this year exploring the people, places and conservation behind Britain's most awarded breakfast tea.

Britons have become increasingly discerning about their coffee, asking where the beans come from, who grew them and how they are roasted. Yet when it comes to tea, the nation's favourite drink, few of us ever stop to think about what ends up in our cup.

New YouGov research commissioned by Birchall suggests Britain has some way to go before tea has its own 'coffee moment'. Taste is the biggest consideration when buying tea, with 60% of UK adults saying it influences their choice – exactly the same proportion as for coffee. Yet despite the importance placed on taste, tea-buying itself remains heavily driven by habit. 41% of tea buyers say they either usually buy the same tea they have always bought or choose the brand they grew up with or their family drank. Just 6% actively seek out higher-quality tea, while only 2% primarily choose their brew based on where it was grown or produced. Consumers are also 15% more likely to consider country or region of origin when buying coffee than when buying tea.

Birchall Tea is setting out to change that.

This September, the fifth generation family tea company is launching its biggest ever brand campaign, with a planned £1 million marketing investment in its first ever television advert alongside a new series of short films designed to take tea drinkers behind the scenes of one of East Africa's most celebrated tea-growing regions.

The campaign celebrates Birchall's Great Rift Breakfast Tea, which this year became the first UK tea brand in Great Taste Awards history to win 16 consecutive Great Taste Awards, along with 101 Great Taste Awards across its entire tea range since 2011, cementing its title as Britain's most awarded breakfast tea for taste. Reaching more than five million consumers across television, digital and social media, Birchall is encouraging more people to think about tea in the same way they think about speciality coffee, by considering where it comes from, how it's grown and why origin matters.

At the heart of the campaign is a new six-part film series, with each episode running for around two minutes, following fifth generation tea expert Dan Graham and conservation leaders supported by Tusk, as they travel through Rwanda and Kenya to explore the remarkable landscapes, people and conservation efforts behind exceptional East African tea.

Filmed among Rwanda's rolling tea estates, the series follows the journey from leaf to cup, meeting expert growers, discovering how altitude, climate and soil shape flavour, witnessing the skill and craftsmanship behind every harvest, and hearing from conservationists about the vital connection between thriving ecosystems and thriving tea-growing communities. Together, the six episodes form a 13-minute film celebrating the story behind every cup.

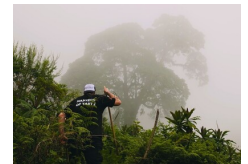
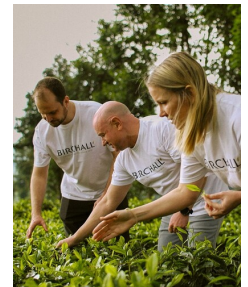
The films also shine a light on Birchall's long-standing partnership with African wildlife conservation charity Tusk. Through a contribution from every pack of Great Rift Tea sold, Birchall helps support Tusk's conservation work, recognising that protecting Africa's extraordinary landscapes is intrinsically linked to preserving the environments and communities that produce some of the world's finest teas.

Alongside the film series, Birchall will launch its first ever television advert on ITV1, a 30-second film introducing viewers to the story behind Great Rift Breakfast Tea, the UK's most awarded breakfast tea for taste. The campaign will be supported by digital content, social media and retail activity in Waitrose and Ocado throughout September.

Dan Graham, Founder and Managing Director of Birchall Tea, said:

"For years, tea has largely been bought out of habit. Our new research bears that out, with over 40% of tea buyers sticking with the tea they've always bought or a brand they grew up with. Yet taste is still the single biggest consideration when people buy tea. We want to encourage people to think more about what creates that taste, and to start asking the same questions they ask about coffee: where was it

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grown, who produced it and what makes it special? Great tea has an incredible story to tell, and we think it's time more people discovered it.

Coffee has transformed over the last decade. People have become fascinated by where it comes from, how it's grown and what influences its flavour. We'd love to see tea appreciated in the same way.

Tea is one of Britain's favourite drinks, yet very few people ever get to see where it begins. Visiting Rwanda reminded us that exceptional tea starts long before it reaches our cups. Healthy landscapes, skilled growers and thriving biodiversity all play a part in creating exceptional flavour, which is why our partnership with Tusk is so important.

We hope this campaign encourages more people to look beyond the tea bag and discover the remarkable story behind every brew."

Launching this September, Birchall's biggest ever campaign marks a significant milestone for the family business and reflects its ambition to champion a new appreciation for premium tea. With taste already the biggest consideration when Britons buy tea, Birchall wants to encourage drinkers to think more about what creates it – from where tea is grown to the people, conditions and landscapes behind every cup.

Further findings from the YouGov research:

- **Tea-buying habits become increasingly entrenched with age:** 40% of tea-buying over-55s say they usually buy the same tea they have always bought, compared with 21% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 20% of 25 to 34-year-olds.
- Perhaps surprisingly, **younger tea drinkers are much more likely to inherit their choice of brew:** 21% of 18 to 24-year-olds say they usually buy the brand they grew up with or their family drank, compared with just 6% of over-55s.
- **Younger adults also appear more willing to experiment:** 10% of tea-buying 25 to 34-year-olds say they regularly try different teas or brands, compared with just 2% of 45 to 54-year-olds.
- **Londoners are among Britain's more provenance-conscious tea buyers:** 12% consider the country or region of origin when buying tea, compared with 9% nationally, while 15% consider ethical or sustainability credentials, compared with 11% nationally.
- **London tea buyers are also less likely to stick rigidly to the same brew:** 27% say they usually buy the same tea they have always bought, compared with 32% nationally and 42% in the East of England.
- **Women are more likely than men to consider taste when choosing tea,** at 63% versus 57%, and are also more likely to consider ethical credentials, at 16% versus 12%.

Research conducted by YouGov among 2,091 UK adults online on 25-26 August 2026. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+). Findings relating to how people usually choose their tea are based on 1,609 respondents who buy tea.

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