



ERNST & YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR®

T W E N T Y - O N E Y E A R S O F E X C E L L E N C E

Cooper Tea Co.

Officer: Barry Cooper, chairman and founder

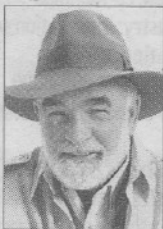
Industry: Beverages

Location: Louisville

Phone: 303-527-1700

Web site: www.coopertea.com

Along with plenty of tea, Barry Cooper has had to swallow some pride on his entrepreneurial path.



Cooper

When he bought his first company, a mail-order tea and coffee business, Cooper thought of it as the perfect opportunity. But shortly after he got it, it went belly up.

He went back to work at Lipton — which he did a few times during his career and where he said he learned all the nuances of the trade. He also cut his teeth at Celestial Seasonings. But Cooper's desire to run his own shop wouldn't die, so he took another shot.

This time his recipe worked perfectly. Now his customers are worldwide and include Starbucks, Lipton, Bigelow, 7-

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Eleven and others.

Barry attributes success to his wife Sandy who helped run the business in the early days, and a spirit of innovation. That innovation has led to such products as:

- Bazza Energy Tea — a zero-calorie drink with antioxidants.
- Bag in a box tea — A tea concentrate used for large quantities for restaurants.
- Single-serving tea pod — A kind of espresso machine but with tea leaves.

He said life experiences and travel sharpened his creativity. He was born in England, spent his early years in Asia, Europe and Africa, then came to the United States in the early 1970s.

"It has all tutored me on the very different approaches that need to be taken when developing business relationships," he said. "That's what it's really all about, treating each other as family — your family at home, your work family and your greater, global family."

BY DOUG MCPHERSON | wordpub@aol.com