

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# Tea at Fortnum & Mason

Fortnum & Mason

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*Tea*

*at*

**FORTNUM & MASON**

PICCADILLY SINCE 1707



EBURY  
PRESS

# *Introduction*

The world of tea and the name of Fortnum & Mason have been intertwined for over three centuries. From the opening of the Far East to western trade, to the first harvest of tea grown on English soil, Fortnum's has sourced, refined and offered this most delicious of the Earth's bounties to its customers.

Each generation discovers tea anew, and develops its own preferences. Whether ancient Chinese blends, perfumed teas, or invigorating green or red bush tea, Fortnum's has sourced the best examples of their kinds.

To celebrate this long and fruitful relationship, I am delighted to introduce this tribute to tea and its place in society. Delicious recipes are complemented by the fascinating history of tea, the properties of individual teas and that most traditional of English pastimes – taking tea. If you love tea, I recommend this short compendium for your delight.

Kate Hobhouse  
Chairman









*The  
History  
of Tea*

# *The History of Tea*

The Origins of Tea

Fortnum & Mason – A Relationship with Tea

An English Beverage of Choice

The Boston Tea Party

The Opium Wars

The Clipper Ships and Great Tea Races

A New Era in Tea

A Royal Appointment

## THE ORIGINS OF TEA

Tea originated in China but myth and mystery surround the actual discovery of what was to become Fortnum's finest and most famous offering. One story relates how, in 2737BC, the learned Emperor Shen Nung was gathering plants. He rested under a tall wild tea bush and boiled some water for refreshment. A few leaves lazily drifted down from the branches and fell into the water. The resulting stimulating and refreshing liquor is what we now call tea. A later legend describes how Dharuma, a Buddhist monk, fell asleep while meditating. He punished himself for this transgression by cutting off his eyelids. They fell to the ground and there the first tea bushes grew. Wild bushes may have been the Emperor's choice as a source of tea, but the plant has been cultivated for millennia. Connoisseurs during the T'ang dynasty (618-906AD) crushed steamed bound-together leaves to make a sort of tea powder that was then mixed with a variety of flavourings – including plum juice and onions, the latter being arguably an acquired taste.



## Teas and Coffers

### CHINA TEAS

Finest Kee Mun China Tea. Specially imported  
by Fortnum & Mason. In Oriental caddies  
1-lb. net 7/6; 5-lbs. net 32/6

Superb Lapsang Souchong - 1-lb. tin 8/6  
10-lb. original boxes enclosed in mats  
per box 80/-

Mayfort Caravan Tea. Resembling the old  
"Russian Caravan Tea" - per lb. box 6/6;  
per 7-lb. caddy 44/-

Finest Ichang. Magnificent Tea, to be used  
unblended. A flavour that is quite distinct  
from any other - - - per lb. tin 5/4

PRETTY INCIDENT. Fortnum & Mason's stand  
of Elephants saluting to the Viceroy



Fortnum & Mason's tea selection in 1927



# TEA AND COFFEE

All because the Inspecting General had  
not had his cup of F & M tea  
*After Meissner*



## CHINA TEAS

**KEE MUN**  
This delicately flavoured tea is packed in original hand-painted caddies that are well worth keeping for ever after  
*1-lb. caddy 7/2 . 5-lb. caddy 31/-*

**LAPSANG SOUCHONG**  
This superb tea, with the famous "smoky" flavour, is sold direct to you in its original Chinese caddy  
*1-lb. caddies, each 8/6*

**LAPSANG SOUCHONG**  
Packed in its original Chinese caddy, just as received by us. A caddy of tea to make a present to someone who understands good things  
*5 lbs. net 31/-*

**DOWAGER**  
This is the marvellous China tea we keep on purpose for those who find their greatest delight in the exquisite flavour of Famosa Oolong leaf  
*a lb. 8/2*

**MAYFORT CARAVAN**  
A very subtle blend of China teas resembling the old Russian caravan tea that used to be imported overland from the East  
*a lb. 6/2*

**EARL GREY**  
We design this to make an afternoon tea of outstanding merit. A blend of rare and altogether wonderful China teas  
*a lb. 4/4 . a 7-lb. caddy 28/-*  
*POST FREE*

**KING'S BLEND**  
As supplied to His late Majesty King Edward VII  
*a 1-lb. tin 4/4 . a 7-lb. caddy 28/-*  
*POST FREE*

**MASON BLEND**  
Ningchow, Kee Mun and Ichang. Delicate of flavour  
*a lb. 3/- . a 7-lb. caddy 20/6*  
*POST FREE*

**GIVE F & M HAMPERS THIS CHRISTMAS**

*forty-four*

Christmas Catalogue, 1931

Sung Dynasty (960–1279AD) tea drinkers whipped ground tea into hot water until it was frothy, which sounds rather like a very early tea cappuccino. There is no record of onions being added to this concoction, but flowers and essential oils made sure it was extremely exotic. It was not until the Middle Ages that tea drinkers in China (1368–1644AD to be exact) developed tea as we know it today. Steamed leaves were dried, added loose to the water and left to steep, before being poured into white porcelain to display its colour. Drying the leaves allowed the tea to ferment or oxidise to a coppery red, and made it easier to store while preserving its essential characteristics. It also meant that it was fit to travel to far-off lands.

Although tea drinking has become inextricably linked with Englishness, it was in fact introduced to Europe by Portuguese and Dutch traders in the early seventeenth

century. Tea had reached London by 1658, although it took the marriage of Charles II to Catherine of Braganza (a Portuguese princess) to make it wildly fashionable at court. The court connection was important in the creation of a certain tea emporium in the heart of St James's ...



Dr Johnson and Mrs Thrale over tea and cakes

## FORTNUM & MASON – A RELATIONSHIP WITH TEA

In 1707, livery stables owner Hugh Mason and royal footman William Fortnum set up business together as Fortnum & Mason, grocers and tea merchants. Tea was the commodity on which the two young men built their dreams and grew their business. William Fortnum had family connections that entailed an intimate association with the magical brew; one of his cousins worked for the East India Company, the principal means of import of what was to become the national drink.



Fortnum's façade, 1840



A special tea flyer, 1930

## AN ENGLISH BEVERAGE OF CHOICE

It took between twelve and fifteen months for precious shipments of tea to travel to Britain by sea. The costs of bringing the tea from halfway across the globe, and heavy taxation, meant that initially only the wealthy enjoyed it in its unadulterated form. By 1707 tea smuggled from Holland was booming on the black market, and much of it was padded out with unmentionable substances. Discerning – and law-abiding – tea drinkers flocked to Fortnum & Mason to buy pure (and purely legal) tea, including strong black teas, that had been created especially to withstand the long journey westwards.