

British Hills Knowledge Base: Afternoon Tea

How did tea come to Britain?

Tea, of course, originally comes from Asia. The earliest tea drinkers were probably people from **China**, and areas nearby. In fact, tea has been drunk in China for at least 2500 years, and probably much longer!

So, when did tea come to Britain? Tea first came to the UK in the **17th century**, around 1615. By this time, European traders reached Asia, and they began to bring a lot of materials back to Europe - including silk, spices, and tea.

At first, tea was a luxury, and drunk only by rich and powerful people. By the **19th century**, however, Britain had begun to grow and import large amounts of tea from **India**, which it controlled. The drink became very popular, and was drunk by people all over Britain.

In fact, tea was so popular that Britain started to lose money buying it! Demand for tea, and taxes on tea, were a major reason for the **American Revolution**, and the **Opium wars** with China.

Tea in Britain

The people of the UK are the **4th largest drinkers of tea** in the world, after Turkey, Ireland, and Iran. Many people drink tea from morning to evening.

Though you can find many kinds of tea, such as **oolong** and **green tea**, in Britain, the most common type of tea is **black tea**. Black teas such as **Assam**, **Ceylon**, and **Earl Grey** are very popular.

Famously, in the UK there is a tradition called **Afternoon Tea**.



What is Afternoon Tea?

Afternoon tea is a tradition that started around **1840**. Afternoon tea is a light afternoon snack, usually of tea and small **sandwiches**, **scones**, or **cake**.

Afternoon tea began as a custom of the **upper class** in Britain - the aristocrats, rich and powerful people. It was very common for upper class ladies. During the time of **Queen Victoria**, afternoon tea became a very common event across Britain.

Today, afternoon tea is not a daily event. Most people only do afternoon tea occasionally, for special occasions. There are many tea rooms across the UK where you can have a delicious afternoon tea!

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Read about tea in Britain and afternoon tea, and answer the question below:

1. Where does tea come from?
2. When did tea first come to Britain?
3. What important historical events did demand for tea influence?
4. What nationality drinks the most tea?
5. What is the most popular tea in the UK?
6. What snacks can be part of afternoon tea?
7. When do British people do afternoon tea today?

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