

The First Cup of Tea

More than four and a half thousand years ago, the mythical emperor Shennong, also known as the "Divine Farmer" or "Divine Husbandman", ruled distant China. He was a great expert in herbs and medicinal plants and according to legend, he was the first to taste tea. How did it happen? One day, the emperor was boiling a pot of water over an open fire outdoors, as he believed drinking boiled warm water was beneficial to human health. A gust of wind blew a dry leaf from a nearby unknown bush into the pot. The pleasant aroma that rose from the pot caught the emperor's attention, and he dared to taste the drink. The flavour was delicious, and the emperor felt both refreshed and invigorated. From that time on, the custom of drinking tea became highly popular. Or was it a completely different story? Readers of Asterix and Obelix might know another tale.

- 2nd century BC

First evidence of tea consumption from archaeological finds in the Mausoleum of the Han Dynasty

- 65 BC

The first written mention of the oldest tea plantation in China

- 350 AD

The term "tea" is included in the supplement to the Chinese encyclopaedic dictionary Er-ya

- Early 7th century

Tea became part of Princess Wencheng's dowry from the Tang Dynasty during her marriage to the ruler of Tibet

- 780 AD

The Chinese tea master and poet Lu Yu compiled the existing knowledge of tea in his work Cha Jing (The Classic of Tea)

- 805 AD

A Buddhist monk brought tea seeds from China to Japan, leading to the establishment of the oldest Japanese tea plantation

- 1522

Birth of Sen no Rikyu, the Japanese tea master who established and spread the wabi style tea ceremony

- 1559

The first reliably verified mention of tea in Europe appeared in a book by Italian geographer G. B. Ramusio

- 1567

Envoys of Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible tasted tea for the first time in Beijing

- 1600

The British East India Company was established to promote trade with Asian countries, dealing in cotton, silk, indigo, saltpetre and opium

- 1610

The Dutch brought the first commercial shipment of tea to Europe

- 1652

Prominent Dutch physician Nikolaes Tulp published a comprehensive treatise on tea

- 1657

The first mention of tea in Czech lands appeared in the correspondence of Jan Amos Comenius, who noted that he had encountered tea “here in Hungary” several years earlier

- 1658

The first advertisement for the sale of tea appeared in the English newspaper Mercurius Politicus

- 1669

The British East India Company began trading tea, with the first shipment to England weighing 143 pounds (approximately 65 kg)

- Around 1700

Josef Kamel, a native of Brno city working as a Jesuit pharmacist in Manila, Philippines, sent a hand-drawn illustration of the tea plant to Europe

- Late 17th century

Tea was available in 500 London coffee houses

- 1712

German physician and traveller E. Kaempfer published a comprehensive treatise on the tea plant in his book *Amoenitatum Exoticarum*

- 1715

Green tea began to be used in England

- 1823

Englishman Robert Bruce discovered wild tea plants in Assam.

- 1832

Ján Kollár mentioned China, Japan and tea in his epic poem *Slávy dcera*

- 1841

The first sugar cube was invented in Dačice, South Bohemia

- 1839

The first few chests of Assam tea were transported by elephants and ships to London

- 1840

Duchess Anna of Bedford created the tradition of afternoon tea

- 1869

A fungal disease began destroying coffee plantations in Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka), leading to the experimental cultivation of tea

- 1885

The company Josef Horn & Co. was founded as one of the first in the Czech lands to trade in tea and spices

- 1885

Instant tea, made from a mixture of tea, sugar and dried milk, was patented in England

- 1903

Tea bags were patented in the United States, with the first tea bags being hand-sewn from silk

- 1904

Richard Blechynden sold iced tea for the first time at the World's Fair in St. Louis, USA

- 1908

Joe Hloucha and his brother opened a Japanese tearoom in Prague, first at the Exhibition Grounds, followed by another in the Lucerna Palace

- 1919

Henri Matisse painted the Tea

- 1980s

Bubble tea with tapioca pearls was prepared for the first time in Taiwan

- 1991

The first tearoom in Prague was opened on Dlouhá Street

- 1993

Dobrá čajovna opened its first branch in Prague's Wenceslas Square

- 2001

The Czech Urasenke Tea Association was founded to teach the art of the tea ceremony