

## The History of Christmas Crackers

Christmas crackers are a traditional Christmas favorite in the UK. They were first made in about 1845-1850 by a London sweet maker called Tom Smith. He had seen the French 'bon bon' sweets (almonds wrapped in pretty paper) on a visit to Paris in 1840. He came back to London and tried selling sweets like that in England and also included a small motto or riddle in with the sweet. But they didn't sell very well. Legend says that, one night, while he was sitting in front of his log fire, he became very interested by the sparks and cracks coming from the fire. Suddenly, he thought what a fun idea it would be, if his sweets and toys could be opened with a crack when their fancy wrappers were pulled in half.

In 1861 Tom Smith launched his new range of what he called 'Bangs of Expectation'! It's thought that he bought the recipe for the small cracks and bangs in crackers from a fireworks company called Brock's Fireworks.

Crackers were also nicknamed called 'cosaques' and were thought to be named after the 'Cossack' soldiers who had a reputation for riding on their horses and firing guns into the air.

When Tom died, his expanding cracker business was taken over by his three sons, Tom, Walter and Henry. Walter introduced the hats into crackers and he also traveled around the world looking for new ideas for gifts to put in the crackers.

The company built up a big range of 'themed' crackers. There were ones for bachelors and spinsters (single men and women), where the gifts were things like false teeth and wedding rings! There were also crackers for Suffragettes (women who campaigned to get women the vote), war heroes and even Charlie Chaplain! Crackers were also made for special occasions like Coronations. The British Royal Family still has special crackers made for them today!