



A Social History of Tea

Jane Pettigrew

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- The first comprehensive exploration of the social history of tea from the 17th century to the present day
- The product of original research based on the incomparable resources of the National Trust's collections and archives
- Written by a highly respected expert in the field of tea and coffee
- A wide range of fascinating images There have been many books written about tea, but although many touch on the established facts of its social history, none draws together all the fascinating background and colorful details of the part played by tea in daily life.

In this book Jane Pettigrew will redress the balance, using the research that she has carried out over the years, and drawing on the incomparable resource of the National Trust's collections and archives. She will delve into many subject areas -- tea gowns, tea dances and social etiquette, for instance -- to satisfy an enthusiastic international audience, waiting, thirsty, for more knowledge.

A Social History of Tea Details

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From Reader Review A Social History of Tea for online ebook

Marcella Bongiovanni says

Weirdly enough, I had to go to Seattle to be able to find a copy of this book as the UK publisher sent it out of print ;)

It's a book for tea aficionados and history bluffs, but it doesn't bring much novelty on the table. You re-read about tea conquest of the Anglo world through the eyes of the (mainly very rich) people.

It's both interesting and boring if you don't love the minutiae of every day life as written in letters and wills. Obviously short on the last century, but maybe really too short.

A book for those who are interested in life and/or avoid history books.

Doc Kinne says

The book worked out well. It is nicely illustrated and nicely researched, especially in the early years.

I think I would have liked a bit more about the 20th century, and especially how tea is used now. Perhaps there is not that much to tell.

The book was very Anglio-centric, as may befit the subject, but I wider focus may be interesting as well. Perhaps another book should (has?) been written?

The review, as I review it, seems mainly negative. I don't want to give that impression. If you're interested in a well illustrated history of tea, weighted between 1600-1900, this is it.

Libby says

Well researched, lots of details about purchases and prices. The author went to a lot of work to put together a thorough book about tea, but it is a bit monotonous in places.

Lauren says

I had an idea of the social history of tea, but I learned a lot more about it.

Rebecca Huston says

A look at the customs of serving and taking tea, mostly in England and America. One of my keepers, by one of my favourite writers on the subject of tea.

Rachel Knowles says

This is a comprehensive study of the history of tea in England with added sections in this new edition from Bruce Richardson about the growth of tea drinking in America. The book starts with the origins of tea and takes you from the 17th century right up to the present day with the development of specialist tea houses like Comins Tea House in Sturminster Newton, Dorset, where I bought this book.

The book is divided up by century and within these chapters, it looks at different subjects such as the sources of the tea that was drunk, the sales of tea, tea taxes, taking tea out and at home, smuggling, tea wares and how tea went from being an extremely expensive and elitist beverage to the drink of choice of the masses. I found that at times the book repeated itself in different sections and the breakdown of the chapters led to some chronological toing and froing, but overall, I found it very readable.

My particular interest is in the Georgian period and I was impressed with the number of quotes from the household records and other contemporary sources which were included in the chapters on the 18th and 19th centuries.

Erin says

This book was obviously well-researched but could have used better editing. The authors introduced topics as though the reader already understood what they are, but then revisited and explained them later. Also, some of the examples were used multiple times, like the example about how tea was boiled and the leaves eaten with butter because colonials didn't know what to do with it.

I think the format would have also benefited from going by topic related to tea rather than trying to shoehorn each topic into each century, especially given that sometimes the timelines bled into each other. For example, the topic that dealt with women's suffrage and tea during the 19th century talked about events that happened in 1925, a quarter of the way into the 20th century. This made it difficult to grasp a good picture of the changes in tea throughout time since the timelines ended up becoming rather disjointed.

Krista says

Very interesting read if you are a tea shop person!!

Charaity Hubbard says

Very interesting read and very entertaining. Chock full of tea history but not a dry read at all. I would definitely recommend this book for anyone interested in tea historically or socially.

Laurel says

Tea passed pleasantly, and nobody seemed in a hurry to move. – Jane Austen, Emma, Chapter 41

Taking tea is so quintessentially British. You cannot think of that noble nation without envisioning its residents with a tea cup in one hand and a cucumber sandwich in the other. English novelist Jane Austen mentions tea no less than 49 times in her major works. The popularity of tea has grown even more since her Regency times, evolving during the Victorian era into a light meal served at four in the afternoon: resplendent with white linen, silver trays, scones and clotted cream. Today, in our fast-paced-world of takeout food and frozen dinners, attending a tea party at a friend's home or tea room is an event to be cherished and savored. The calming ritual and lively conversation is the ultimate indulgence that has not changed for polished society for four hundred years.

The tale of tea is a captivating story revealed in *A Social History of Tea*, a new expanded second edition by British tea authority Jane Pettigrew and American tea historian Bruce Richardson. Originally published in 2001 by The National Trust, this new edition has been revised and expanded and includes the research of two tea authorities from both sides of the pond. We are so internationally bipartisan these days—I am sure that mad King George III must be rolling in his grave!

Having long been a “tea advocate” I knew of Mr. Richardson from my cherished subscription to *TeaTime* magazine. I was thrilled to discover that he would be a speaker at the 2013 Jane Austen Society of North America's Annual General Meeting in Minneapolis. I missed his talk, *Society Steeped in Tea*, but glowing reports piqued my interest in obtaining a copy of his new book with Pettigrew. I was not disappointed. Beautifully designed with 150 full color images, this tome on the evolution of tea through the last four centuries and its influence on society and world economics is fascinating. Broken down into an introduction, six major chapters, a select bibliography, a list of illustration credits and an index, readers can easily use *A Social History of Tea* as either an illustrated history, a reference book, or purely a pleasure read, depending on their mood. Being a Janeite, I jumped to the index and skimmed for Jane Austen's name. Huzzah. There she is on page 127 in a featurette entitled *Tea in Literature with Charles Dickens and Lewis Carroll*, two other famous British authors from the 1800's who show that taking tea was an excellent way to bring characters together in a prudential parlor or at a mad tea party. Several passages illustrating Austen's use of “tea-things” by her characters are featured from her novels, and if we pay attention, the timing of when they are taking tea gives us a social insight into when it was drunk and what was served with it.

“The next opening of the door brought something more welcome: it was for the tea-things, which she had begun almost to despair of seeing that evening...Fanny was very thankful. She could not but own that she should be very glad of a little tea, and Susan immediately set about making it, as if pleased to have the employment all to herself...Fanny's spirit was as much refreshed as her body; her head and heart were soon the better for such well-timed kindness.” – *Mansfield Park*, Chapter 38

Richly detailed and agreeably accessible, *A Social History of Tea* is both enlightening and entertaining. Every important historical, economic and social aspect is covered. I particularly appreciated the details surrounding the forming and growth of The East India Trading Company, the Boston Tea Party of 1773 which sparked the American Revolution, and the rise of tea rooms suitable for respectable ladies to dine out at the end of the nineteenth century. We can also thank the Victorian's for raising tea-time to an art form chock-full of the incredibly delicious fare we enjoy today.

In Jane Austen's world “tea meant rest and pleasure, and its absence would be a severe disappointment.” (127) Pettigrew and Richardson have combined detailed history, social asides and beautiful illustrations covering the four centuries that we have enjoyed tea—its rise and fall in popularity—and rebirth. *A Social History of Tea* is the resource for those who would like to discover even more about this delectable beverage. There is a guaranteed abundance of rest and pleasure on every page. I recommend it highly.

Laurel Ann, Austenprose

Jaye says

Tea is my favourite drink, so I'm curious about its history and origins; how and why it has been enjoyed over the centuries. As an english woman, I have grown up drinking it and often think to myself as I sit down with a cup, how many generations have gone before me, using this same drink as a source of comfort and warmth. Hopefully I will get some interesting answers!

This would be the perfect choice for a coffee table book: its size, the art work, and of course, its theme. It's a book that I enjoyed lounging in the window seat with, with - you guessed it - a cup of tea. A good book to browse through and pick out which chapters interest you, rather than attempting to read it in its entirety: it is rather large. For example, you may be interested in the very origins of tea-drinking, or in the cultures/traditions surrounding it, i.e. afternoon tea; or in how the tea houses got started. Highly recommended for tea drinkers :)
