

Christmas Crackers



Christmas Crackers

Lawrence Earle – December 2020

Quiz

Who was Tom Smith?

1. A butcher
2. A baker
3. A toy maker



Christmas Crackers

Quiz

Which of these are connected with Christmas crackers?

1. Gaudete Sparagnapane
2. Manchester
3. Tom Brown
4. Charlie Chaplin
5. Paris
6. Paper hats

Christmas Crackers

What are 'Christmas Crackers'?

Dictionary definition:

"A cardboard tube of brightly coloured paper, usually given at Christmas parties, that makes a noise when pulled apart by two people and contains small presents."

From:




Christmas Crackers

What are 'Christmas Crackers'?

There are two strips of chemically impregnated paper inside which make a 'bang' when the cracker is pulled apart by two people.



Christmas Crackers

What are 'Christmas Crackers'?

Each person takes the end of a cracker and pulls and if there is a group around the table, everyone crosses their arms to pull all the crackers at once.



Christmas Crackers

What are 'Christmas Crackers'?

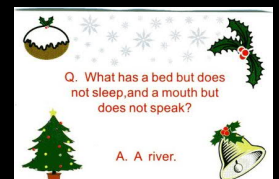
Everyone holds their own cracker in their right hand and pulls their neighbour's cracker with their free left hand



Christmas Crackers

What are 'Christmas Crackers'?

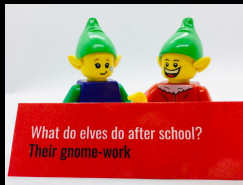
Inside the cracker there is a paper crown made from tissue paper, a motto or joke on a slip of paper and a little gift.



Christmas Crackers

What are 'Christmas Crackers'?

The mottos in crackers are terrible examples of English humour – unfunny, often very well known, as the same jokes have been appearing in crackers for decades!



Christmas Crackers

What are 'Christmas Crackers'?

Paper hats



Christmas Crackers

Origin of the cracker

1830 – Tom Smith

started work as a small boy in a baker's and ornamental confectioner's shop in London, selling sweets such as fondants, pralines and gum pastilles.



Christmas Crackers

Origin of the cracker

1840

Tom Smith set up his own shop in Goswell Road, Clerkenwell, East London.

Trip to Paris - discovered the 'bon bon' – sugared almond wrapped in tissue paper



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Origin of the cracker

1840 Christmas

'Bon bons' sold extremely well – by January however demand virtually ceased

Added a small love note in the tissue paper to stimulate sales.

Simple idea – evolved over next 7 years



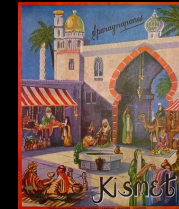
Christmas Crackers

Origin of the cracker

1846

Confectioner Gaudente Sparagnapane established rival company.

'The oldest makers of Christmas Crackers in the United Kingdom'



Christmas Crackers

Origin of the cracker

1847 – birth of the 'Cracker'

Needed something 'special' to stimulate sales.

Crackle of a log burning in a fire.

Packaging increased to accommodate 'cracking mechanism'



Christmas Crackers

Origin of the cracker

1849

Almond disappears - motto kept

Replaced by various toys, trinkets and jewellery as surprise gifts



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Origin of the cracker

1860s – 'Bangs of Expectations'

Experimented to find a compound to give a satisfactory bang.

Tom Brown – chemist ex Brock's Fireworks helped to perfect the 'Cracker snap'

Crackers also known as 'Cosaques'



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Evolution of the cracker

1869 Tom Smith died

Business taken over by sons Tom, Walter and Henry.

Walter introduced paper hats and toured the world looking for unusual ideas for the gift

Crackers made by hand



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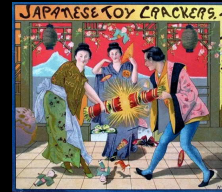
Evolution of the cracker

1880s Themed crackers

Bachelors & spinsters (false teeth & wedding rings)

Wedgewood Art Crackers

Interest in the Orient eg Japan



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The end of Tom Smith?

1889

March fire broke out at Tom Smith, causing damage of 1000s of pounds

Company back on its feet by Christmas, 2000 employees, producing 120,000 boxes a year



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End 19th cent / early 20th cent

Love verses / topical notes on events & crazes

Greyhounds to Jazz, Frothblowers to Tutankhamen, Persian Art to the Riviera.

Corny jokes and riddles.

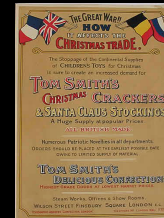


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End 19th cent / early 20th cent

Variety of themes based on current affairs

Votes for women, Charlie Chaplin, coronations, the wireless, even battles such as Tel el Kebir (Anglo Egyptian War 1882)



Christmas
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1900s

Specialty crackers

'Millionaires Crackers' – silver box containing piece of gold and silver jewellery

Also celebrate major occasions:

Paris Exhibition 1900, War Heroes 1918, Prince of Wales World Tour 1926



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1900s

The diamond ring

1927 A gentleman wrote to the Tom Smith Company enclosing a diamond engagement ring and 10 shilling note as payment for the ring to be put in a special cracker for his fiancée.

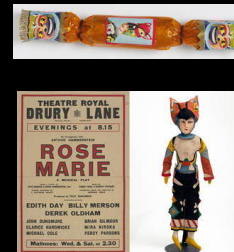


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1900s

Totem Crackers

1920s Tom Smith crackers very popular
Dance number from musical *Rose-Marie* – the 'Totem Tom-Tom'.
Sold in boxes of 12 crimson, green & gold.
Contained toys, imitation jewellery, jokes



Christmas
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1900s

Batger & Co

Various competitors. Brightly coloured cracker boxes collected.
Batger & Co well known for its cracker labels.



Christmas
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1900s

Batger & Co



Christmas
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Fun Facts

2001 Longest cracker 63.1m long, 4m diameter

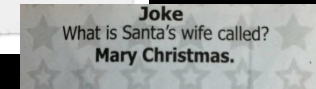
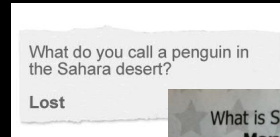
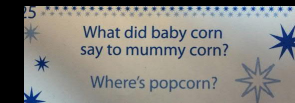
Biggest cracker pull 18 October 2009

During World War II restriction on production of cracker snaps

Ministry of Defence bundles of snaps to imitate machine gun fire.

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Jokes



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Modern-day 'Millionaire crackers'

Christmas 1974

Box of 6 crackers – cost £4,018,600!

Aston Martin Vanquish Coupe £190,000

Breguet Tradition Watch £19,000

Cartier Diamond Necklace £18,600

Graf Von Faber-Castell £6,500

1 Like No Other Trip £77,500

Sunseeker Yacht £3,700,000



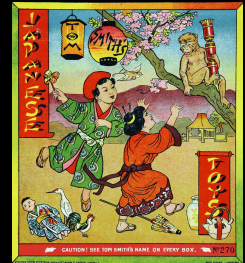
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Modern-day 'Millionaire crackers'



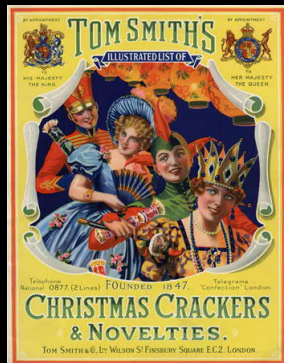
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Gallery



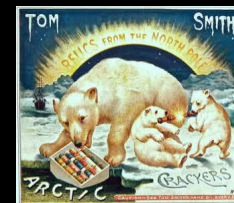
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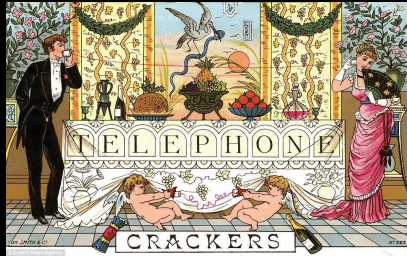
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The
End

