



CELEBRATING BRITAIN

# Sweets for the season

We dive into the fascinating history behind some of our favourite festive confectionery



"After Eight can turn any evening into an occasion..."

I LOVE After Eight Wafer-thin Mints—they have the same effect on me as camellias or candlelight; they make me feel expensive and pampered and gay, even if I'm only having a quiet supper with friends or just listening to records. Of course, this is the thing about all the After Eight chocolates. They're such essentially elegant chocolates that they can turn the most ordinary evening into an occasion.

If you're a Mint addict like me there's nothing more gorgeous than those wafer-thin peppermint creams coated in rich dark chocolate... Mmm... Then, when you've finished them off, there's the After Eight Chocolate Assortment—equally irresistible, and with the most mouth-watering collection of centres ever. And third in the range is the After Eight Dessert Chocolate. Plain dark chocolate. Perfect.

## AFTER EIGHT

ROWNTREE AND COMPANY LIMITED



## After Eight

Launched in 1962, the minty square with its own envelope has stayed true to its origins in that debonair decade. Originally manufactured at Rowntree's York factory, the creation of After Eight was a technical triumph for the time. The fondant could not be covered in chocolate unless it was hard, so an ingredient was added to allow the peppermint middle to soften in the fortnight after production. Equally iconic is After Eight's logo, which was based on an antique, baroque clock that appeared in early TV adverts. By the 1980s, the chocolate mint was so popular you could buy a silver-plated After Eight carriage to display them in. True to their name, three-quarters of these chocolates are eaten after 8pm!



## MILK TRAY

Many a friend or relative will be familiar with a certain purple box at Christmas. The signature packaging is widely recognised today, but the name Milk Tray

originated in 1915, when a loose assortment of milk chocolates were sold from display trays. The following year, Cadbury launched Milk Tray in cardboard

boxes and suddenly they looked special enough to make a gift for any occasion. Many of us remember the classic 'Man in Black' television advertising campaign that started in 1968, featuring a handsome action hero who dived off cliffs and flew helicopters through storms to deliver a box 'all because the lady loves Milk Tray'. As part of centenary celebrations in 2015, a competition to become the eighth Milk Tray Man in the black polo-neck was launched. It was won by Patrick McBride, a Liverpool firefighter, beating more than 20,000 applicants.



GOOD THINGS FROM THE FACTORY IN A GARDEN

This is what makes people say 'I want Cadbury's Milk Tray'





## Walkers Shortbread

This Yuletide treat, which comes in cheery red tartan packaging, was granted the Royal Warrant from the Late Queen for the supply of shortbread and oatcakes to the Royal household. The buttery biscuits date back to 1898 when 21-year-old Joseph Walker opened his bakery in Speyside, with a loan of £50 and an ambition to bake 'the world's finest shortbread'.

His creation has been in the family's recipe book ever since, and now his grandchildren and great-grandchildren run the company in Scotland. If we didn't dunk them in our Christmas cuppas and instead laid all the shortbread fingers produced in one year end to end, they'd reach from John O' Groats to Land's End by road 29 times. Think we'll stick to

enjoying them in front of the Christmas tree.



## MR KIPLING MINCE PIES

Biting into your first mince pie usually means Christmas has started. Though commonplace today, the pies were a status symbol during the 17th and 18th centuries. For a well-to-do Stuart or Georgian host or hostess, a display of pies in an assortment of shapes was seen as a show of wealth. Mr Kipling's 'exceedingly good' mince pies are a modern-day commercial equivalent, with at least a third of us reaching for one at this time of year. So, to keep up with demand,

the company can make up to 720 individual mince pies a minute from its factory in Barnsley, South Yorkshire, resulting in an astonishing 27 million every year.



## Quality Street

The wrapped treats in the famous tin began life in the sweet shop of John and Violet Mackintosh, who developed their 'Celebrated Toffee' in Halifax, West Yorkshire, in 1890. This new type of toffee was first sold to local workers – business boomed, taking production from Violet's brass pan over the kitchen fire to a factory. They bought chocolate maker AJ Caley & Son in 1932, and the first tin of Quality Street was produced in 1936. Named after the play by JM Barrie (of Peter Pan fame), the tin contained 11 chocolates and seven toffees in individual wrappers. The decorative and reusable tins, with characters Major Quality and Miss Sweetly lending an air of romance, helped to market the sweets around the world. They're still made in the 'Toffee Town' of Halifax today.