

A brief history of bubble tea

THE FIRST WAVE

1983: A tea house owner in Taichung, Taiwan, claims to have invented bubble tea after seeing coffee served cold. In 1987, a staff member added *fen yuan* (sweetened tapioca pudding) to the tea, creating pearls.

1992: First bubble tea shop, Bubble Tea Garden, opens in Singapore at Marina Square.

2001-2002: The fad peaks with the number of shops topping 2,000.

2003-2004: Fierce competition, price cuts, many shops fold.

THE SECOND WAVE

2007-2009: Entry of Taiwanese brands Koi and Gong Cha

2011: Business peaks. Homegrown brands also benefit.

2017: Gong Cha's master franchisee RTG Holdings ceases operations and kickstarts Singapore brand Liho. Gong Cha re-enters under a different franchisee.

THE THIRD WAVE

2017: New trends emerge, more emphasis is placed on healthy consumption.

2018: Taiwanese brand Tiger Sugar opens, igniting a craze for brown sugar bubble tea.

2019: International chains such as Xing Fu Tang and Milksha enter.