

100 FANTASTIC FACTS ABOUT VIMTO!

Some history...

1. The inventor of Vimto was a gentleman called (John) Noel Nichols who was born in Blackburn in December 1883 to a cotton yarn agent, John Cooke Nichols and his wife, Lois, a governess.
2. Noel Nichols invented Vimto 100 years ago in 1908, when he was 24.
3. Noel Nichols was the grandnephew of the Scottish author Samuel Smiles and 'self-help' was very much a part of the family ethos.
4. Using the unique 29 ingredients of herbs, spices and essences from around the world, Noel Nichols first created the unique Vimto taste in a wooden barrel in his warehouse.
5. The Vimto empire began as a modest wholesale druggist and herb importer business at 49 Granby Row in central Manchester.
6. Vimto was traditionally intended to be a healthy pick-me-up, which gave those who drank it energy.
7. The name 'Vimto' comes from the fact that it was created as a tonic that gave you 'vim' and 'vigour'. Later shortened to vim-tonic, it finally became known as Vimto.
8. In the early days, Vimto promoted itself not only as a health tonic, but also as an ideal temperance beverage, at the height of the movement against the 'evils' of alcohol.
9. J.N. Nichols & Co traditionally supplied unique labels, so that the brand could be easily recognised, despite the variety of bottle shapes.
10. By 1910, Noel Nichols' warehouse proved too small so he uprooted his operations to Chapel Street in Salford, where Vimto began to be sold in herbalist shops and temperance bars as an alternative to alcohol.
11. In 1912, Noel Nichols registered the Vimto name as a medicine, in the form of a tonic to keep people fit and healthy.
12. The Vimto factory was almost completely burned down during the 1941 blitz in Manchester.
13. Between 1940 and 1953, because of World War II, sugar had to be rationed to ensure there was enough for everybody – this included the rationing of cordial drinks containing sugar, such as Vimto.
14. The herbal and medicinal side of the business ceased after the war as, with the introduction of the National Health Service Act in 1948, medicines from the chemist became more readily available.

Vimto – The company

15. Noel Nichols' grandson is now the Chairman of Nichols plc, John Nichols, and his great grandsons work for Vimto Soft Drinks so the family connections live on.
16. In 1961, the company became a public company.
17. Noel Nichols died in 1966, having been joined in the running of the firm by his sons Peter in 1939 and John in 1950.
18. In 1971 Noel Nichols' grandson, John Nichols, the current Executive Chairman, joined the firm.
19. The company moved to a purpose-built factory at Ledson Road in Wythenshawe, South Manchester in 1971.
20. Noel Nichols' other Grandson, Simon Nichols, joined the firm in 1983 and became Finance Director and Company Secretary, retiring in 2005.
21. The great-grandsons of Noel Nichols, James and Matthew, have now also joined the company.
22. Nichols plc acquired the draught dispensing business, Cabana Soft Drinks, in 1986 and holds a variety of other brands, including Panda and Sunkist which have made their mark in the competitive soft drinks market.

23. In 1999 Vimto moved to a larger factory at Golborne, near Haydock, which brought all production together under one roof from three geographically diverse sites.
24. The brand is now worth £200million worldwide (as at Feb '08).

Vimto – The soft drink

25. Vimto is made using a secret formula including a mix of three fruit juices – grape, blackcurrant and raspberry – along with a mysterious blend of 23 fruit essences, herbs and spices.
26. It wasn't until 1921 that bottling agents started to add carbonated water to Vimto concentrate and distribute it to corner shops, cafes, ice cream parlours and cinemas as Fizzy Vimto.
27. In 1927 the move was made to Ayres Road, Old Trafford to a large former laundry building. The staff numbered 32 and a fleet of delivery trucks were emblazoned with the Vimto name. By this time the drink was fully established as soft drink, taken for its flavour and thirst-quenching properties, despite maintaining its description as a 'Health Tonic' which 'Keeps You Fit'.
28. Vimto has also traditionally been promoted as a delicious and warming drink with the addition of hot water. 'Hot Vimto' remains very popular today as an alternative winter warmer.
29. Vimto first appeared in cans in 1964.
30. Fizzy Vimto was first produced by Nichols in 1969.
31. In 1982, the first 'ready-to-drink' Vimto cartons were produced.
32. In 1987, Vimto launched the first diet version of the drink, with the same delicious flavour but without the sugar.
33. Since 1992, the fruitiness of Vimto has been indicated in the label and can design, replacing the lettering favoured in previous decades.
34. Pack design is continuously evolving, with the PET bottle having replaced glass for both cordial and sparkling versions of Vimto.
35. The 500ml still bottle was launched in 2002 to meet emerging demand for a ready-to-drink bottled product.
36. Vimto is available in 3 different ready to drink versions, prisma, sports cap and 500ml still bottle to provide the customer with choice in the ready-to-drink still version.
37. All Vimto drinks are suitable for vegetarians and vegans.
38. The Vimto recipe remains a closely guarded secret to this day and a suitcase containing the secret recipe was escorted to the new factory site when it was opened in 1999 to make sure it remained under wraps.
39. Vimto cordial is available in four delicious flavours; Original, No added sugar, Orange and Apple flavours.
40. To celebrate the centenary Vimto has launched a bespoke, limited edition bottle. Created as a near replica of the original ceramic style bottle with stopper available in 1908, there will only be 6,000 bottles produced of this must-have collectors' item.

Vimto – Other ranges

41. The first Vimto lollies were launched between 1992 and 1994, first as an ice lolly then as a regular lolly.
42. The Vimto ice lolly proved so popular that, in 1995, a further lolly was added to the portfolio, the Vimto Splitz.
43. Vimto produced a limited edition 'Vimto Jelly' in 2001 so that the delicious flavour could be spread on toast.
44. A new flavour was introduced to the range in 2002, in the form of Vimto Citrus, a delicious blend of grape, orange, lemon and pink grapefruit.
45. Vimto Jammie Dodgers were produced as a limited edition in 2005, much to the delight of consumers.

46. In 2006, two exciting new limited edition varieties were added to the range, namely “Who put Oranges in my Vimto?” and “Who put Apples in my Vimto?” with delicious Orange and Apple flavours respectively.
47. As well as Vimto drinks, there are 6 different types of Vimto confectionery including Vimto chewy Bon Bons, Vimto Chew Bars, Vimto Tongue Ticklers and Vimto lollipops.

Vimto - Around the globe

48. The first overseas country to try Vimto was Guyana in South America in 1919.
49. Vimto concentrate and cordial were first sold abroad in 1919 to Guyana, then to India (1924) which was then part of the British Empire, and to Saudi Arabia (1927).
50. In 1924, Vimto became a registered trademark in India and quickly became greatly appealing to the Indian palate. Vimto’s popularity soon spread to Burma (now Myanmar), Goa and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).
51. A firm called Abdulla Aujan & Brothers was introduced to Vimto by an Indian employee in 1928 and was soon importing large quantities for distribution in the Middle East. The popularity of Vimto soon spread through Aujan’s network of trading branches into the Arab States controlled by local Sultans such as Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Dubai and Abu Dhabi.
52. Vimto quickly became a popular drink within Muslim areas of the Indian subcontinent that became known as Pakistan, partly due to the non-alcoholic nature of the drink.
53. By 1930, Vimto could be bought in over 30 countries worldwide, from Peru to Albania and Liberia. Vimto International continues to encourage new markets, as well as increasing sales in longstanding areas.
54. India gained its independence following the Second World War and, as a result, purged itself of most British brands – Vimto, however, was retained.
55. Following the Second World War, the old wooden barrels in the factory were replaced by stainless steel vats and new filling and labeling machines were installed to increase production.
56. After the Second World War a shipping service was provided from Salford docks to a port in Bahrain and wooden crates of Vimto Cordial were then transported around the Gulf in Arab ‘dhows’.
57. By the 1960’s, pallet loads of Vimto were being transported to the newly developed ports of Kuwait and the Trucial States.
58. Due to the take-off of international exportation, Vimto was exported in double strength in order to reduce transportation costs. However, it turned out that the fuller flavour and sweetness was actually preferred by Middle Eastern palates and Vimto Cordial has become particularly popular during Ramadan for its restorative effect after fasting.
59. In 1975 a company called Solent Cannery negotiated a licence from Nichols plc to produce canned carbonated Vimto for sale to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and then later also the United Arab Emirates. In 1978 and 1979 they were awarded the Queen’s Award for Export Achievement on the strength of the Middle Eastern sales. In 1980 Nichols plc purchased Solent Cannery.
60. Local production in Gambia and Senegal in Africa commenced in the 1980’s and Vimto has been well received and enjoyed in Africa.
61. Vimto first became available in the U.S.A in 1970 where it was very well received because of being ‘caffeine-free’, containing vitamin C and being lower in calories than many other soft drinks.
62. With the worldwide movements to open trade between countries, new markets continued to be opened and developed. In the early 90’s Tanzania became another African Market to produce Vimto and 1997 saw Vimto cordial locally produced in Australia. The range of products available internationally continued to expand as Vimto introduced confectionery lines.
63. In 2005 and for the first time in its 95 years, Vimto became available in a ready to drink (RTD) pouch pack in Guinea through our licensee Ets Khazaal Ltd. This is also the first time there has been a still RTD variant in the whole of Africa.
64. The Vimto brand has now carved out a massive market share in the Middle East, Far East and Africa and is present in over 65 countries worldwide.

65. There are licensed manufacturers of Vimto across the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Americas.

Vimto – Advertising and the brand

66. Newspaper and cinema adverts have traditionally illustrated Vimto as being a treat for all generations and a great problem solver.
67. The “Vimto Book of Knowledge” was first published during the First World War. In the past the books were given away in bulk to bottling agents to distribute to their customers and schools also requested copies for the children. There were two editions during World War 1 - the first was known as The Little Blue Book for Scholars and the second with a red cover was entitled The Little Vimto Book for Scholars. In total six editions were published and they finished in the 1970s.
68. Advertising of the Vimto brand began in the 1950s with a series of popular showcards by Punch cartoonist Herbert Stanley Terry. Glamorous women also appeared on showcards and continued to promote the drink right through to the 1960s.
69. The first Vimto television advert appeared in 1956. Televisions were rare at the time and had only two black and white channels. The cost of the advert was £110.
70. Vimto TV advertising hit the colour screens in the 1980s.
71. In the sixties, Vimto started selling its products in a red, blue and white striped ‘British’ design to show the brand’s support for Britain and its pride at being a Great British brand.
72. To encourage bottling agents and mineral water outlets, the company supplied advertising showcards, bottle display stands and promotional novelties such as *The Vimto Book of Knowledge*, published regularly from the First World War as an aid to self-improvement.
73. Derek Griffiths, children’s entertainer and actor, fronted the Vimto advertising campaign in the 1980s.
74. In 1986, Vimto featured Max the British Bulldog character on all cans, labels and adverts. More fruit juice was added and all artificial colours were removed to make the drink healthier and more natural. Max the British Bulldog appeared in many of the adverts during the 1980s.
75. John Peel provided the voiceover for the 1980s adverts, promoting the exciting, youthful, light-hearted side of Vimto.
76. In 1990 Sue Nichols, wife of Simon Nichols, formed the Vimto Advertising Collection and organised a traveling exhibition to celebrate the brand.
77. A TV advert featuring cuddly animals and TV soap star, Victor McGuire (from Bread), was launched in 1993.
78. Comedian and TV presenter, Angus Deayton, provided the voice of a talking spaniel in the adverts of the early 1990s which were designed to appeal to mums.
79. Recent marketing campaigns include the cheeky humour provided by the poet Purple Ronnie from 1997 to 2004, who like Vimto, ‘Puts a smile on your face’.
80. Set to the tune of the classis 80s hit, D-I-S-C-O, and sung by Matt Lucas, star of Little Britain and Shooting Stars, 2004 saw the launch of the triumphant V-I-M-T-O campaign.
81. Purple Ronnie was replaced with the successful ‘Shlurple the Purple’ campaign in 2005
82. In 2006 the advertising campaign took a twist, with the story of Billy and his oversized Dad’s Pants!
83. Mobile phone ring-tones are available to download from the website with the theme tune of the Dad’s Pants advert.
84. In 2007, Vimto splashed out by launching a new-look lorry fleet for its flagship brand. Vimto’s sense of fun was captured in a three-dimensional image of a giant Vimto swimming pool on the side of each lorry.

And finally some random Vimto facts...

85. Vimto has survived two world wars, the sinking of the Titanic, the completion of the building of the Empire State Building, the first successful orbit of the moon by astronauts, the creation of the World Wide Web and the formation of the European Union!
86. In 1989, Vimto broke a world record by creating the tallest ever pyramid of Vimto cans!
87. In 1991 another world record is broken when Vimto created a 1050m² giant jigsaw!
88. The world record for the tallest pyramid of champagne flutes was broken by Vimto in 1992, when 16,125 champagne flutes were piled on top of one another!
89. In 1992, an oak sculpture monument was set up in Manchester to mark the birthplace of Vimto at Granby Row.
90. It has been known for people to mix Vimto with alcoholic beverages, however the recently fashionable alcoholic cocktail known as “Cheeky Vimto”, actually contains none - being just a perplexing mixture of WKD Original Vodka Blue with ruby port.
91. It has been known for Vimto to be added to a host of recipes to add flavour, colour and zest, including pancakes, jams, milkshakes and ice-lollies.
92. Peter Kay is a well-known fan of Vimto and mentions the brand several times in his autobiography, The Sound of Laughter. He wrote to Jim'll Fix as child to see if he could get a swimming pool made up full of Vimto, so he could dive in a drink to his heart's content!
93. Vimto has become an increasingly popular tippie at weddings, with requests for personalised bottles having become a regular occurrence at Vimto HQ.
94. Vimto Soft Drinks has been a long-standing charitable sponsor and supporter of The Variety Club. The children's charity supports a number of worthwhile causes in and around the North West including funding a bone marrow unit at Manchester Children's Hospital and paying for a hydrotherapy pool in Bury.
95. Chairman John Nichols was interviewed by Channel M, Manchester's own TV channel, for an historical series called 'I Love Manchester'. This is due to be aired in early April.
96. A book called “Vimto, Story of a Soft Drink” was penned by Sue Nichols in 1994.
97. Employees from Vimto Soft Drinks made a splash in 2007 when they took to the waters for the inaugural North of England Corporate Regatta at Pennington Flash, which was jointly administered by Trafford and Mersey Rowing Clubs.
98. In the same year Vimto was invented, Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond, was also born – another great British icon.
99. Vimto has been nominated for 'Icon of England' status on an on-line poll, based on its affinity it shares with the people of Northern England.
100. Vimto received a special telegram from 'The Queen' at The Palace (Theatre!) on 19 Feb 2008 to mark its centenary year.