



WORD OF THE MONTH

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Tim Tam slam

- **noun**: (also **Tim Tam explosion**, **Tim Tam suck**) the activity of using a Tim Tam biscuit as a straw to suck coffee (or other hot beverage) through, before eating it.

THE STORY BEHIND THE WORD OF THE MONTH

Tim Tams, celebrating their 50th anniversary this year, are chocolate biscuits made by Arnott's, a biscuit manufacturer based in Australia. They were originally modelled on *Penguins*, chocolate-coated biscuits with a chocolate cream filling, made by British brand McVitie's. The Australian biscuit came on the market in 1964, and was named after a horse that won the 1958 Kentucky Derby. Over time, the popularity of the Tim Tam has given it an iconic status in Australia almost on a par with Vegemite.

The practice of dunking a biscuit into a hot beverage is not new, but the **Tim Tam slam**, which has also been called the **Tim Tam explosion** and **Tim Tam suck**, is a step beyond the simple dunk. The biscuit is not only dunked but also used as a drinking straw. The first written evidence for this term (as **Tim Tam suck**) is found in a 1980s newspaper article, and gives a good description of the activity:

A colleague says that renaming Tim Tams 'Cobber cookies' ... would destroy one of the pleasures of life—the **Tim Tam suck**. Nibble off each end of the biscuit. Make one hot mug of coffee. Now using the Tim Tam as a sort of straw, dip one end in the coffee and suck up the coffee. The trick is that when the coffee reaches your mouth, you have a millisecond to get the coffee-loaded biscuit into your mouth before it collapses and you are wearing Tim Tam all over your chin and front. Disgusting—but delightful. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 February 1989)

As this quotation makes clear, it is necessary to get the soggy biscuit in your mouth quickly before it falls apart.

The activity appears to have gained wider popularity as a result of a 1990s song, which also popularised the variant **Tim Tam slam**. This quickly became the most popular term used to describe it:

Tim Tam Slamming—or the **Tim Tam Explosion** or the **Tim Tam Suck**—appears to have gained underground popularity in Melbourne universities about four years ago. The habit was popularised by the Melbourne band the Oxo Cubans about two years ago with its single *The Tim Tam Slam*. (*Melbourne Age*, 17 April 1997)

In **Tim Tam slam**, the *slam* element, which derives from the verb *slam* 'to put (something) into action suddenly or forcefully', makes reference to the need to 'slam' the biscuit into your mouth. The basketball term *slam-dunk*, which describes the action of a

player slamming the ball down into the basket, perhaps influenced the development of the variant.

The activity gained further exposure when Arnott's used **Tim Tam suck** in a 2002 advertising campaign. When even a world-renowned chef is impressed, as food journalist and television personality Matt Preston notes below, you know it has achieved culinary greatness:

Heston Blumenthal says one of the five food things that the UK should adopt from Australia is the **Tim Tam Slam**, that mouth-explosion of liquefied chocolate biscuit that comes from sucking your tea or coffee diagonally through a Tim Tam and immediately ramming it in your gob. (*Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 21 January 2014)

Tim Tam slam and its variants are being considered for inclusion in the second edition of the *Australian National Dictionary*.



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