



The Oxford Companion to Sugar and Sweets (Oxford Companions)

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A sweet tooth is a powerful thing. Babies everywhere seem to smile when tasting sweetness for the first time, a trait inherited, perhaps, from our ancestors who foraged for sweet foods that were generally safer to eat than their bitter counterparts. But the "science of sweet" is only the beginning of a fascinating story, because it is not basic human need or simple biological impulse that prompts us to decorate elaborate wedding cakes, scoop ice cream into a cone, or drop sugar cubes into coffee. These are matters of culture and aesthetics, of history and society, and we might ask many other questions. Why do sweets feature so prominently in children's literature? When was sugar called a spice? And how did chocolate evolve from an ancient drink to a modern candy bar?

The Oxford Companion to Sugar and Sweets explores these questions and more through the collective knowledge of 265 expert contributors, from food historians to chemists, restaurateurs to cookbook writers, neuroscientists to pastry chefs. The Companion takes readers around the globe and throughout time, affording glimpses deep into the brain as well as stratospheric flights into the world of sugar-crafted fantasies. More than just a compendium of pastries, candies, ices, preserves, and confections, this reference work reveals how the human proclivity for sweet has brought richness to our language, our art, and, of course, our gastronomy. In nearly 600 entries, beginning with "? la mode" and ending with the Italian trifle known as "zuppa inglese," the Companion traces sugar's journey from a rare luxury to a ubiquitous commodity. In between, readers will learn about numerous sweeteners (as well-known as agave nectar and as obscure as castoreum, or beaver extract), the evolution of the dessert course, the production of chocolate, and the neurological, psychological, and cultural responses to sweetness. The Companion also delves into the darker side of sugar, from its ties to colonialism and slavery to its addictive qualities.

Celebrating sugar while acknowledging its complex history, The Oxford Companion to Sugar and Sweets is the definitive guide to one of humankind's greatest sources of pleasure. Like kids in a candy shop, fans of sugar (and aren't we all?) will enjoy perusing the wondrous variety to be found in this volume.

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