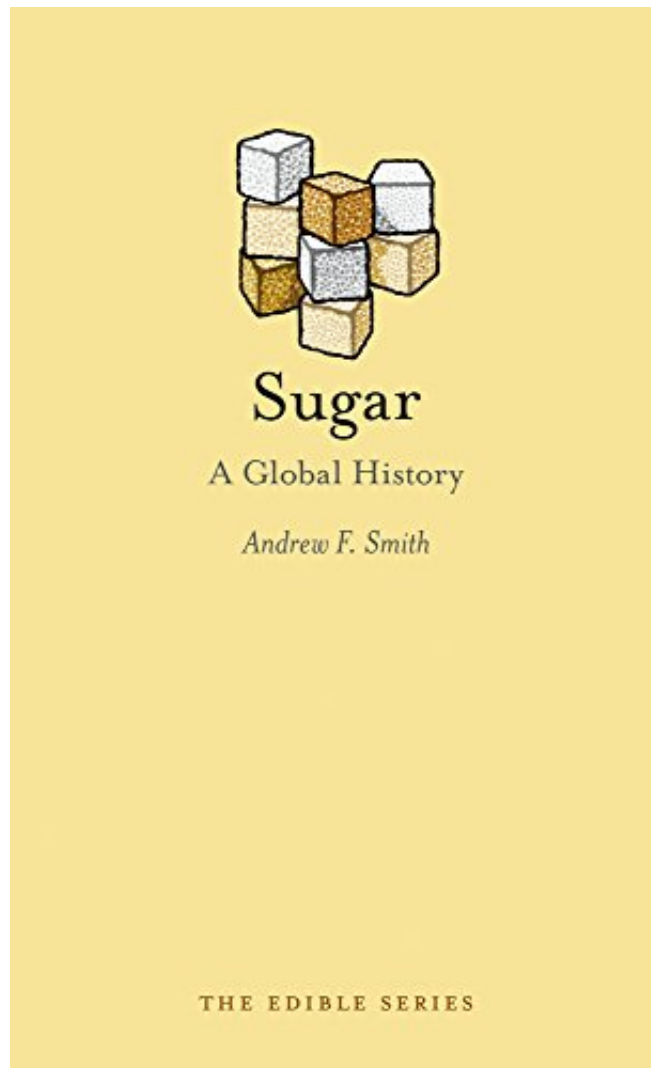


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# Sugar: A Global History (Edible)

*by*  
Andrew F. Smith



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## Synopsis

It's no surprise that humankind's love affair with sugar stretches back over millennia. The addictive sweetener originated in New Guinea around 8,000 bc and quickly spread throughout India, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean. By the tenth century it had become the European obsession and soon afterwards a major export of American colonies. Today sugar is grown around the world and is a main component of sweets, cakes, and soft drinks, as well as of pasta sauce and peanut butter – despite their savoury nature. Sugarcane and sugar beets are two of the most important global commodities, but they are also controversial for their high doses of carbohydrates and lack of nutritional quality. Over-consumption of sugar is associated with many chronic diseases and is a major cause of obesity. *Sugar: A Global History* explores sugar's reputation as one of the most beloved yet most reviled substances that humans consume. Andrew F. Smith's compelling history of the infamous ingredient is peopled with determined adventurers, relentless sugar barons and greedy plantation owners, alongside plant breeders, food processors and politicians. Smith combines historical context with the gripping stories of those who have benefited and suffered because of sugar, and he analyzes mankind's convoluted love-hate relationship with the sweetener that has such a powerful hold over us. This delightful and surprisingly action-packed book offers a layered and definitive tale of sugar, and is perfect for culinary students, food critics, chefs, or anyone who loves to bake and eat sweet treats.

## Look inside the book

SUGAREdibleSeries Editor: Andrew F. SmithEDIBLE is a revolutionary new series of books dedicated to food and drink that explores the rich history of cuisine. Each book reveals the global history and culture of one type of food or beverage. Already published Apple Erika Janik Barbecue Jonathan Deutsch and Megan J. Elias Beef Lorna Piatti-Farnell Beer Gavin D. Smith Brandy Becky Sue Epstein Bread William Rubel Cake Nicola Humble Caviar Nichola Fletcher Champagne Becky Sue Epstein Cheese Andrew Dalby Chocolate Sarah Moss and Alexander Badenoch Cocktails Joseph M. Carlin Curry Colleen Taylor Sen Dates Nawal Nasrallah Dumplings Barbara Gallani Eggs Diane Toops Figs David C. Sutton Game Paula Young Lee Gin Lesley Jacobs Solmonson Hamburger Andrew F. Smith Herbs Gary Allen Hot Dog Bruce Kraig Ice Cream Laura B. Weiss Lemon Toby Sonneman Lobster Elisabeth Townsend Milk Hannah Velten Mushroom Cynthia D. Bertelsen Nuts Ken Albala Offal Nina Edwards Olive Fabrizia Lanza Oranges Clarissa Hyman Pancake Ken Albala Pie Janet Clarkson Pineapple Kaori O' Connor Pizza Carol Helstosky Pork Katharine M. Rogers Potato Andrew F. Smith Pudding Jeri Quinzio Rice Renee Marton Rum Richard Foss Salmon Nicolaas Mink Sandwich Bee Wilson Sauces Maryann Tebben Soup Janet Clarkson Spices Fred Czarra Sugar Andrew F. Smith Tea Helen Saberi Tequila Ian Williams Truffle Zachary Nowak Vodka Patricia Herlihy Whiskey Kevin R. Kosar Wine Marc Millon Sugar A Global History Andrew F. Smith REAKTION BOOKS To Meghanne, Reilly, Ethan and Owen— may you enjoy sweets in moderation Published by Reaktion Books Ltd 33 Great Sutton Street London EC1V 0DX, UK First published 2015 Copyright © Andrew F. Smith 2015 All rights reserved No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers Page references in the Photo Acknowledgements and Index match the printed edition of this book. Printed and bound in China A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library: 9781780234786 Contents Prologue 1 Early Sugar History 2 New World Sugar to 1900 3 Global Sugar 4 Sugar Uses 5 Sweets and Candies 6 American Bliss 7 Sugar Blues Epilogue Recipes Select Bibliography Websites and Associations Photo Acknowledgements Index Prologue From birth, humans are attracted to sweet-tasting foods, and for good reason: all 10,000 taste buds in the mouth have special receptors for sweetness. Sweet foods cause the taste buds to release neurotransmitters that light up the brain's pleasure centres. The brain responds by producing endocannabinoids, which increase appetite. This may have an evolutionary explanation: about 40 per cent of the calories in breast milk come from lactose, a disaccharide sugar that is readily metabolized into glucose, the body's basic fuel. The sweetness leads infants to eat more, making them more likely to survive. Naturally bitter plants may signal toxicity, while sweet foods are generally safe to eat and are usually good sources of simple carbohydrates. Once we become conditioned to consume sweet foods, even the sight of them will cause us to salivate; the saliva will help begin the process of breaking down the carbohydrates, signalling to the digestive system that nutrients are on the way. For millennia, our ancestors cultivated and bred sweet fruits and vegetables and sweetened foods with juice from fruit, berries, figs, dates, nuts and carrots, saps from carob, maple or palm trees, nectar from flowers, and the leaves and seeds of sweet herbs. Over the centuries humans have learned to harvest, refine or concentrate sweeteners such as maltose from grains, glucose from grapes, fructose from fruits, berries and corn, and sucrose from sugar cane and sugar beet. Humans have even harnessed the bee to provide honey, the Old World's first important sweetener. The most common sweetener for the past 500

years, however, has been table sugar, or sucrose (C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>22</sub>O<sub>11</sub>), a disaccharide composed of two monosaccharides – glucose and fructose – that are linked in chemical combination. These separate during digestion; the glucose molecules pass into the bloodstream through the small intestine and are distributed to the organs, where they are metabolized into energy (any surplus not needed for energy is stored in fat cells). Fructose, the sweetest natural sweetener, is mainly metabolized in the liver, where enzymes convert it into glucose. Most plants contain sucrose, but the greatest concentrations are found in the *Saccharum* genus, a very tall bamboo-like member of the grass family. The genus likely originated in South or Southeast Asia and it consists of several species, each with numerous varieties. Only two species – *Saccharum robustum* and *S. spontaneum* – can propagate in the wild, and they contain comparatively little sugar. *S. robustum* originated on New Guinea, and from it indigenous peoples domesticated *S. officinarum* or Creole cane, which has a higher sugar content than other species. It was such a success that by about 8,000 years ago it had been widely disseminated to the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Southeast Asia and China. In India, *S. officinarum* hybridized with *S. spontaneum*, a cane native to South Asia, to create *S. barberi*, a common sugar cane cultivated in India. In China, *S. officinarum* hybridized again with *S. spontaneum*, this time creating *S. sinense*, a sugar cane commonly grown in southern China. The ‘eyes’ or ‘nodes’ on sugar cane. Humans have cultivated and tapped the sweet juice of various members of the *Saccharum* species for thousands of years, but *S. officinarum* has dominated the sugar cane industry, although other species and varieties have been used for breeding purposes since the late eighteenth century. Growing and processing cane is a labour-intensive activity. All domesticated canes are propagated asexually – sections of the stalk with at least one bud (also called an eye or node) are cut and planted. The cane fields had to be weeded and fertilized, and irrigated in many places. When ripe, the canes had to be cut down. These tasks were accomplished by hand until the invention of mechanical devices in the twentieth century. Under ideal conditions, cane stalks can grow as much as 5 cm (2 inches) per day for several weeks. When mature, they are about 2 inches thick, and they grow to heights of 3.6 to 4.6 metres (12 to 15 feet). They reach their optimum sugar content at anywhere from nine to eighteen months. When the stem begins to flower, the sucrose is at its maximum level (ideally 17 per cent). The stalks are cut off just above the root in a process called ‘ratooning’. The root then grows a new stalk, which will be lower in sugar content and less resistant to disease; still, stalks can be ratooned a few times before it is more efficient to remove the roots and plant new stem cuttings. Humankind’s dedication to the cultivation of sugar cane clearly demonstrates our millennia-old appreciation of its sweet taste. Initially people consumed the cane juice by simply chewing or sucking on pieces of stalk. It is difficult to preserve or store cut canes for any length of time: once cut, the stalk quickly deteriorates and turns into a brown mush. It is possible to squeeze the juice from the cane, but once exposed to air, it begins to ferment. This characteristic is a definite advantage if the desired end product is alcohol, but not helpful if what is wanted is a sweetener that can be preserved. How our ancestors worked out how to process cane juice so it could be preserved, and how the implementation and improvement of this process affected human history, is the subject of this book.

### 1 Early Sugar History

Extracting the sweet juice from sugar cane and turning it into crystals of sugar is a complicated process. There is little archaeological evidence to indicate just where or when cane juice was first converted into a form that could be preserved for longer periods of time. Most historians consider eastern India, about 2,500 years ago, the point of origin for the sugar industry. The main reason for this attribution is that many early Indian written sources mention cane sugar and its sweet juice. The Mahabharata, a commentary on Sanskrit grammar attributed

to Patanjali and written some time between 400 and 200 BCE, includes recipes for rice pudding, barley meal and fermented beverages – all sweetened with some type of sugar. Sugar is also mentioned in the *Artha śāstra*, Kautilya's classic Sanskrit work on Machiavellian statecraft dating to 324–300 BCE. This describes different sugar products, from *guda* (the least pure) to *khandā* (the source of the English word 'candy') to *śukra* the purest sugar. The ancient *śukra* probably resembled the Indian sweetener, still used today, called jaggery – a coarse, solid sugar that retains some molasses as well as ash and other impurities. (The Sanskrit word *śukra* has, ironically, ended up in English as 'saccharin' – a sugar substitute.) Early sugar products were made by crushing or grinding cane stalks using animal-powered mills fitted with stone wheels similar to those used to grind grain at the time. Crushing expelled the juice, which was then boiled to concentrate it. What's left is raw sugar, which is a sweet but dirty-brown semi-solid that does not ferment. Over time, innovators devised ways to filter out impurities, resulting in a whiter, sweeter and more crystalline product. The crystals could then be removed from the surrounding dark liquid and formed into soft balls. Later they were shaped into solid pieces of hard sugar and eventually these were ground into granulated sugar when needed. The coarse, dark liquid, later called molasses, was removed during the milling process. It could not be further refined into sugar using the technology of the time, but it, too, could be used as a sweetener and for making alcoholic beverages. The advantages of refined sugar are immense. It can be granulated, pulverized, crystallized, melted, spun, pulled, boiled and moulded. It blends smoothly with other ingredients, either in a home kitchen or on an industrial production line. It can be used to mask the bitterness and enhance the properties of medicines. It is possible to preserve it for a long period of time, making a sweetener available throughout the year. Processed sugar had many culinary uses, such as concealing or enhancing flavours, making alcoholic beverages and preserving fruits and vegetables. Just as important, it could be transported to those regions where sugar cane could not grow, and thus became an important early commercial trade item. Eastern India, where sugar cane was extensively grown and processed, was also the birthplace of Buddhism. According to Sucheta Mazumdar, author of *Sugar and Society in China* (1998), sugar cane was integrated into Buddhist religious rituals, and many sayings attributed to Buddha (563–483 BCE) include references to sugar cane. Sugary juices were not forbidden to monks observing a fast, and many Buddhist festival foods were made with sugar. Sugar also appears frequently in other early religious sources, including Hindu works such as the *Buddhaghosa*; or, *Discourses on Moral Consciousness* (c. 500 CE), which describes sugar cane mills, the extracted juice, boiling the cane juice, raw sugar and lumps of sugar. Some sugar historians believe that these lumps were pliable, like toffee, rather than hard, while others consider this the first reference to crystalline sugar. Jain literature also mentions a sugar candy, which was particularly important for Jains, who do not consume honey because they believe that it consists of millions of living beings that would die if the honey were eaten. Presuming that India was the point of origin for sugar manufacturing, it spread quickly to Southeast Asia and southern China. Little is known of the Southeast Asian operations with the exception that sugar – possibly in the form of sculptures – was exported to China by 221 BCE. There is more information available about the early sugar industry in China, where, legend has it, Buddhist monks introduced sugar cane and the process to make solid sugar. If the monks were not the first to introduce it, they clearly popularized it. Sucrose, or cane syrup, was not China's first sweetener. In northern China, where grains were the dominant crops, a sweet syrup of maltose was made, mainly from sorghum. Maltose, a disaccharide composed of two glucose molecules, is much less sweet than sucrose. It was the most important sweetener in China and it is still used in Chinese cookery today. The process for

manufacturing sucrose was introduced into southern China by the third century BCE, but it was not commonly used in northern China until centuries later. The Chinese used sugar in medications as well as for sweetening food and beverages; they may have been the first to make rock candy. Cane sugar, however, was not considered a necessity and Chinese sugar processing did not evolve in the way it did in South Asia and, later, the Middle East. According to Marco Polo, who probably visited China at the end of the thirteenth century, the Mongol emperor of China, Kublai Khan, imported Egyptian sugar artisans to help teach the Chinese how to process sugar cane. Indeed, great progress on sugar growing, processing and preparing was made in the Middle East. Sugar in the Middle East and Mediterranean

The Greeks and Romans visited India in ancient times and became aware of Indian sugar. Nearchos, Alexander the Great's general who, in 327 BCE, sailed from the mouth of the Indus River to the mouth of the Euphrates in Asia Minor, reported in his *Indika* that 'a reed in India brings forth honey without the help of bees, from which an intoxicating drink is made though the plant bears no fruit.' Small quantities of sugar made their way into the Mediterranean region during Roman times. These imports were used for medicinal purposes. Dioscorides, the first-century CE Greek physician and botanist, wrote in his five-volume *De Materia Medica*, 'There is a kind of congealed honey, called saccharon, found in reeds in India and Arabia Felix', which, he added, has the 'appearance of salt; and, like that, is brittle'. Galen, Seneca, Pliny and others reference a kind of honey imported from India, and many modern observers believe that this was in fact sugar. By the sixth century CE, sugar was shipped from India to a port on the Somali coast and then overland to Alexandria, and from there, small quantities were traded to physicians, who used it for medical purposes. Sugar cane was grown in Mesopotamia by 600 CE and commercial production began shortly thereafter. The Byzantine historian Theophanes recorded that blocks of *zuchar* were among the booty of great value captured in 622 in the campaigns by Heraklius against the Sassanid Empire. The Arabs had conquered Mesopotamia by 641, and through them sugar cane and its manufacturing process spread westward to the Nile River, the Nile Delta, the eastern Mediterranean and East Africa. It continued to be disseminated westward to the Mediterranean islands – Cyprus, Malta, Crete, Sicily and Rhodes – and sugar cane was widely grown in northern Africa, reaching southern Morocco by 682 CE. It was later grown in parts of southern Spain, southern Italy and Turkey. In Mesopotamia the centre of the sugar industry was at the head of the Persian Gulf in the Tigris–Euphrates Delta. Sugar became a very important commodity in Baghdad, which at the time controlled an empire that extended from what is today Iran to Spain. Baghdad, with its estimated population of 1 million, was reportedly the largest city in the world. Ibn S'ayyar Al-Warraq's tenth-century Baghdadi cookbook includes scores of recipes that have sugar as an ingredient. The sugar industry thrived until the arrival of the Mongols, who sacked Baghdad in 1258; the region fell into political disorder and sugar production was devastated, but by this time the sugar industry was well established in the Mediterranean. Growing sugar cane and manufacturing sugar in the Middle East and the Mediterranean entailed heftier investments than in India. The hot, dry climates east of India required large irrigation systems to grow sugar cane. As these systems frequently extended over great distances, governments or very large landowners were needed to construct, maintain and regulate them. Also needed were customers who were willing and able to buy sugar – a very expensive luxury at the time. Upper Egypt was particularly well positioned to grow sugar cane. With its good warm climate, plenty of water and rich soil in the Nile Delta, sugar became an important ingredient in Egyptian culinary life, at least among the wealthy. On occasion, however, sugar was also distributed to common people. Feasts often included sugar sculptures and guests, depending on their rank,

were given between 1 and 25 lb (450 g –11.3 kg) of sugar as gifts. Sugar was sold in markets throughout Upper Egypt, which became the major supplier of sugar to the Middle East and Europe. Sugar growers, millers and refiners grew wealthy. As Europeans re-conquered the Mediterranean lands, such as Crete and Sicily, from the Muslims, they learned how to grow sugar cane and manufacture sugar. During the Crusades Europeans conquered Jerusalem, which they controlled from 1099 to 1187. Sugar production was a lucrative business in this area and Tyre (today in Lebanon) was an important sugar trading city. William of Tyre, who wrote a history of the kingdom of Jerusalem, proclaimed that sugar was a precious product 'very necessary for the use and health of mankind, which is carried by merchants to the most remote countries of the world'. Soldiers and pilgrims in the Near East were introduced to sugar, which they carried back to their home countries. This helped create a demand for sugar in Europe, where monarchs and other nobles, at least, enjoyed it. Egyptian sugar mill in the Middle Ages. Sicilian sugar mill, c. 14th century. Venice, an Italian city-state, had been importing and re-exporting sugar from the eastern Mediterranean since the tenth century. When the Crusades began in 1095, this trade became a very lucrative business. The Venetians expanded their control over Crete and extended their influence over other islands, such as Cyprus. Thanks in part to the sugar re-export business, the small city-state soon became one of the most important powers in the Mediterranean. Although Genoa would later become a central distribution point for Portuguese sugar from the Atlantic islands, it was Venice that dominated the sugar trade in the Mediterranean for almost 500 years. A serious problem that restricted the growth of sugar production in Europe during the Middle Ages was the lack of labour. This was exacerbated by constant wars in sugar-producing areas of the Mediterranean, followed by the arrival of the Black Death (bubonic plague), which infected Europe from the 1340s. During the next several decades an estimated 30 to 60 per cent of the population of Europe died, creating a labour shortage. In addition, during this time there was an increasing migration from rural areas to cities, which added to the labour shortage in sugar-growing areas. Plantation owners in Sicily and other Mediterranean islands paid premium wages for farm workers, and jobs there were sought after by many Europeans. Still, there were not enough labourers, so plantation owners turned to slaves. Both Christian and Muslims used slaves to plant, harvest and process sugar. At first these were prisoners captured during military campaigns in what is today Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece, but slaves were also acquired from East and, later, West Africa. Besides a diminished labour pool, Mediterranean sugar manufacturing had another serious limitation – climate. Sugar cane prefers tropical climates. A freeze, or even just a spell of cool weather, could limit the growth of the cane. A more serious problem was the lack of cheap, plentiful fuel to stoke the boilers that converted cane juice into refined sugar. The demand for firewood caused deforestation throughout the sugar-growing areas of the Mediterranean. Deforestation reduced soil fertility and water availability as rainwater flowed away, eroding unprotected soil. The sugar industry began to decline in the eastern Mediterranean – Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and Palestine – beginning in the fifteenth century; by the end of the century these areas were importing sugar. The sugar industry continued to thrive in Cyprus and Crete under Venetian control, and in the western Mediterranean for another century, before it too began to falter. Yet another change in the eastern Mediterranean sugar trade was the rise of the Ottoman Turks. In 1453, they captured Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire; they then conquered the Middle East and North Africa and moved into Eastern Europe. The Turks controlled the overland trade routes between the east and the west, and when the trade was disrupted, European royalty and the upper classes were unable to easily import sugar, spices and other riches from Asia.

Europeans began to explore ways of circumventing the Turks and Arabs. Atlantic Sugar Beginning in the fourteenth century, the Portuguese began exploring the eastern Atlantic, where they found and colonized islands such as Madeira and the nearby island of Porto Santo. Sugar plantations were established on these islands, and sugar was exported from them to Portugal by the mid-fifteenth century. Any excess not sold in Portugal was exported, generating a considerable profit, which encouraged more exploration and more sugar plantations. Spain, too, explored the Atlantic and established a colony on the Canary Islands off the coast of northwest Africa. These islands had the advantage of a good climate for growing sugar cane and indigenous peoples who could be enslaved to run the mills. Sugar was exported from the Canaries to Spain by 1500. As was the case in the Mediterranean, lack of fuel was a problem; when the islands were deforested, the sugar industry faltered – and later collapsed due to stiff competition from cheap sugar producers elsewhere. Optimal locations for growing sugar cane were the uninhabited islands of São Tomé and Príncipe in the Gulf of Guinea, off the coast of tropical Africa; the Portuguese had discovered them in 1470. They had an ideal climate, easy access to slaves in Africa, lots of water to irrigate the cane fields and plenty of fuel to run the mills. Sugar production ramped up, and even with the expenses of the long, arduous sail back to Portugal, it generated large profits for planters.

**2 New World Sugar to 1900**

Christopher Columbus was very familiar with the Atlantic islands and the sugar industry that thrived on them. As an agent for an Italian firm in Genoa, Columbus visited Madeira to purchase sugar in 1478. His first wife's father was the governor of Porto Santo. After Columbus's wife died, he married again, this time to a woman whose family owned a sugar estate on Madeira. When Columbus returned to Spain after his first voyage to the Caribbean, he was convinced that sugar cane would grow on the islands he had explored. On his second voyage to the Caribbean in 1493, Columbus stopped in the Canary Islands and picked up seed cane, which he introduced to the Caribbean island of Hispaniola (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic). Columbus and other Spanish explorers established settlements on other islands, such as Puerto Rico (1508), Jamaica (1509) and Cuba (1511). Sugar cane was planted on these islands, as it would be later in the Spanish and other European colonies of Central and South America. Hispaniola was the most important New World sugar producer. Sugar was exported from the island to Spain by 1516; within 30 years, the island had 'powerful mills and four horse mills'. Spanish ships picked up 'cargoes of sugar and the skimmings and molasses that are lost would make a great province rich', reported Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, the contemporary chronicler of the island's history. No image of the real Christopher Columbus has survived. This print was made in 1892 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of his discovery of America. While the Caribbean had the perfect climate for growing cane and there was plenty of fuel and water, there was a shortage of manpower. Few Spaniards were willing to migrate to the New World to labour on sugar plantations. Indigenous peoples, such as the Taino and Carib tribes, had no interest in working on these plantations; when the Spanish enslaved them, they were understandably less than industrious. What with constant wars, and epidemics of communicable diseases brought over by the Europeans, an estimated 80 to 90 per cent of the indigenous population of the islands died off during the century following the first European encounter. The Caribbean sugar industry languished. Brazil was a different story. The Portuguese had landed there in 1500 and later set up small coastal trading posts. It was also an ideal location for growing sugar: the climate was perfect and there was an abundance of fuel for the boilers, plenty of water and an unlimited amount of land. The indigenous people provided a potential supply of slave labour. Small sugar plantations called *engenhos* (the Portuguese word means 'mills', but was applied to the entire sugar plantation complex – fields,



mills and factories) were established along the coast by 1520. By 1548, six engenhos were operating in Pernambuco; by 1583, there were 66, plus another 36 in nearby Bahia and still others in the southern region. Portuguese sugar growers are credited with inventing or popularizing several crucial technological improvements. During the early seventeenth century, the engenhos adopted a new mill design that crushed cane between three vertically mounted rollers or cylinders. Cane would be fed into two rollers on one side, and then workers on the other side turned the cane back around through other rollers. This was a much more efficient process than the traditional mill press, which was promptly abandoned. The new style of mill could easily be powered by animals, water or even, in some cases, wind; it required fewer workers to operate it and much more sugar was produced as a result. Yet another important technological change occurred in the process of refining sugar. Traditionally sugar mills had just one large cauldron, in which the cane juice was boiled until supersaturation occurred. The Brazilians created a multiple-cauldron system in which the liquid was ladled from one large cauldron into a series of three successively smaller vessels. This gave overseers much greater control over the process and permitted them to operate on a larger scale. Brazilian sugar production rapidly escalated, but the industry encountered a major setback when its indigenous labour pool contracted. Disease and wars decimated the native population, and then the Catholic Church in Brazil began to oppose the enslavement of indigenous peoples. A solution soon appeared: the Portuguese sugar colony on São Tomé, which could not compete with the Brazilian sugar industry, shifted its business plan to exporting African slaves to Brazil. Initially many slaves were skilled workers who had worked in the sugar plantations on São Tomé. Later the slaves were any people who could be acquired in Africa and São Tomé served simply as a holding area and a point of departure for Portuguese ships that crisscrossed the Atlantic, transporting slaves to Brazil and elsewhere in the New World, and carrying sugar home to Europe. During the seventeenth century alone, an estimated 560,000 African slaves were shipped to Brazil and other European colonies in the Americas.

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Sugar A Jim Seals

Pork: A Global History (The Edible Series), Cocktails: A Global History (The Edible Series), Lemon: A Global History (The Edible Series)

### **What people say about this book**

Anne Lacombe, "Read it, buy it and give copies to all your friends.. Masterpiece of information. Great intelligence. You see the history of the world, and you see the creation of a commodity. And you see where sugar is today: many places where it should not be. Wonderful reading. You will want to give it to all your friends!"

Michelle, "Awesome, quick introduction to the history of sugar and .... Awesome, quick introduction to the history of sugar and how it relates to history of slavery and other things. Glad to have read it, it was very enlightening."

lyndonbrecht, "Overall perhaps a more sour than sweet history (see Chapter 7) but an informative, largely historical book.. This is typical of the series, brief, excellently illustrated, with solid writing and at the end, recipes, a time line and additional reading. I liked the book,

but found some of the history a bit cursory. It gets better in later chapters. Chapters 1 through 3 are a history from domestication through about 1900. The first written accounts are from northern India 2,500 years ago, with the region of domestication not agreed on. The sequence includes the migration of production to the Middle East, Egypt, Cyprus and the Mediterranean islands, the Atlantic islands and so on to the Caribbean and Brazil. The history is interesting but fast-paced. The usual problem is the lack of labor and so the crop has long had an association with compelled labor and slavery. Anyone reading this the first time will note the huge demographic effect of sugar, bringing African slaves to the New World, and accounting for the intricate ethnic mix of places like Hawai'i. I found Chapter 4, a history of how sugar was used, to be the most interesting. Sugar was not only a sweetener but a medicine. There are mentions of sugar in English accounts as early as the 1200s. The most popular drink in the Middle Ages, says Smith, was Hippocras, a spiced wine than was originally made with honey but sugar replaced it. Sugar history merged with that of coffee, tea and chocolate, and is nicely covered in this chapter. Chapter 5 is on candy and sweets, and includes, briefly, the origins of some of today's major manufacturers and brands. Chapter 6 focuses on the US and is an excellent discussion of the development of sugar-loaded processed foods and soft drinks. There's some interesting discussion of doughnuts. Chapter 7, "Sugar Blues," goes into the dental and dietary problems associated with sugar consumption, not just refined cane sugar but corn sugar and artificial sweeteners. Chapter 7 is the second best chapter. The recipe section includes recipes from old texts, and is itself interesting."

Abi Denton, "Four Stars. Useful for my essay writing and an interesting read."

The book by Andrew F. Smith has a rating of 5 out of 4.7. 8 people have provided feedback.

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## **Book Information**

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