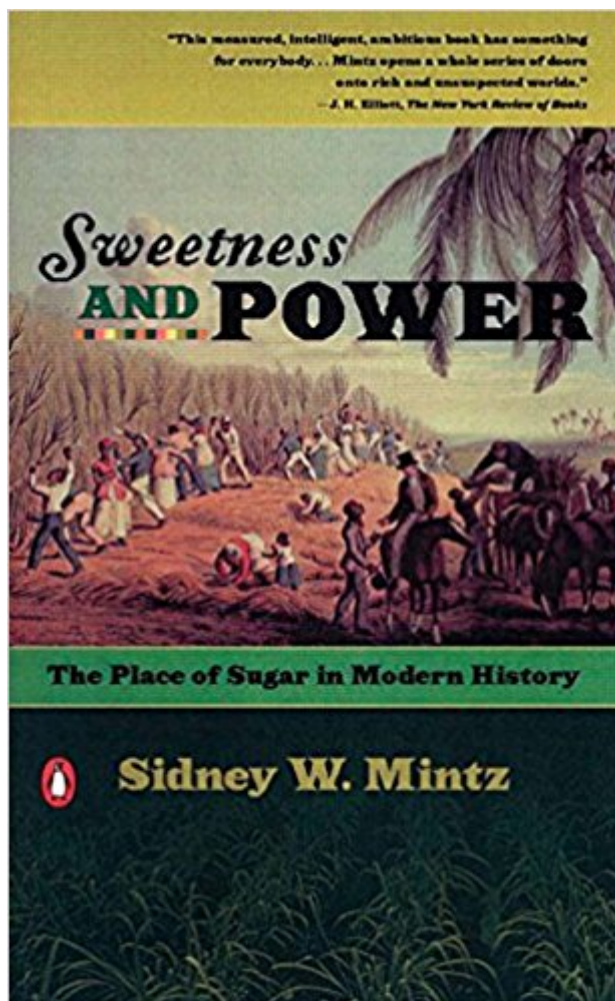


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Sweetness And Power: The Place Of Sugar In Modern History



Synopsis

A fascinating persuasive history of how sugar has shaped the world, from European colonies to our modern diets. In this eye-opening study, Sidney Mintz shows how Europeans and Americans transformed sugar from a rare foreign luxury to a commonplace necessity of modern life, and how it changed the history of capitalism and industry. He discusses the production and consumption of sugar, and reveals how closely interwoven are sugar's origins as a "slave" crop grown in Europe's tropical colonies with its use first as an extravagant luxury for the aristocracy, then as a staple of the diet of the new industrial proletariat. Finally, he considers how sugar has altered work patterns, eating habits, and our diet in modern times. "Like sugar, Mintz is persuasive, and his detailed history is a real treat." -San Francisco Chronicle

Book Information

Paperback: 274 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition (August 5, 1986)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140092331

ISBN-13: 978-0140092332

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.6 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars 53 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #5,564 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Customs & Traditions](#) #4 in [Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies](#) #12 in [Books > Science & Math > Agricultural Sciences > Food Science](#)

Customer Reviews

"Shows how the intelligent analysis of the history of a single commodity can be used to pry open the history of an entire world of social relationships and human behavior." -The New York Review of Books
"Like sugar, Mintz is persuasive, and his detailed history is a real treat." -San Francisco Chronicle
"A fine book. It not only tells a fascinating story, it is also something of an antidote to the static quality of much anthropological writing." -Jack Goody, The New York Times Book Review

Sidney W. Mintz was a professor at the Johns Hopkins University, where he taught anthropology. His academic specialization focused on the anthropology of food, with a particular focus on the

consumption and commodification of sugar. His works include *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past*; *The World of Soy*; and *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. He died in 2015.

Clearly a classic in the world of food studies, and in some ways, definitely worthy of that title. I struggled to get through this book at first--his rapid global history of sugar production bounced rapidly through time and was difficult to slog through to get to his arguments about the English working class. Once I did get there, his argument really came together, but before then, it was hard to see the point of where he was going. It should be noted that Mintz is really not all that interested in production but rather in the consumption of sugar among the English, and really among the English working class. It did its job, certainly, and I recognize how important it is as a work, but it didn't necessarily 'wow' me or make me rethink very much about how I saw the history of sugar

This anthropology of sugar shows how the cultivation of this crop and the use of the end product affected people in two parts of the world: the Caribbean islands and the British Isles. The book gives a short history of sugar and its origins in New Guinea and subsequently the Philippines and India, how it spread west with the Arabs and eventually found its way to Europe. It goes on to tell of sugar's role in European Imperialism, and how the production of this "drug food" led to the use of slavery in pre-industrial plantation agriculture; and conversely, how its eventual use by the common people of England helped to adapt them to the industrial economy, where one had to eat quickly of prepared foods during an assigned break in their work schedule. My greatest insight from this book derives from the above understanding that the increasing use of sugar in the diets of "modernized" people reflects upon its ability to provide calories (thus energy) at a cheap price, in a product with "shelf-life" that allows people to focus on their work (for their employers) for eight or more hours per day. I might add that this book was a great "warm-up" read before I began the two volume set: *The Invention of the White Race*, by Theodore Allen.

Great read. I was never into social science or anthropology, but had to take a class that required this book. I couldn't put it down! Mintz has really done his research and gives so much detail. His insight into the use of sugar over the past 1000+ years is incredible, especially in the last chapter, where he ties it into other aspects of our lives (some of which you may not expect are affected by sugar). I recommend this book to anyone who cares about what we eat and where it comes from.

Mintz's 'Sweetness and Power' is a classic. He makes a compelling argument on the role of sugar and the sugar industry in the development of modern capitalism. This book is a must read for anyone interested in the historical development of capitalism, its structures, and capitalist labor; Caribbean colonial history; or the sugar industry. I just purchased a second copy to replace my first which is too worn and marked to continue reading.

This is a wonderful history of a "thing" -- sugar -- placing it in a rich context of politics and economics, production and consumption, and history. For those interested in how the objects of the world hold it together, this is a book they must read.

Engagingly written, SWEETNESS AND POWER traces the history of sugar from the old world right to where we are, in the gluttonous new world of today. Sugar consumption has been increasing ever since its introduction and there's no looking back. From the exotic tastings of kings, to its medicinal uses, to its association with the current obesity plague, Sidney Mintz has created a very worthwhile and readable narrative. Highly recommended... - lc

I love the way that you are whisked through the history of sugar, the consequences of its agricultural development, and influence on the development of capitalism.

The classic work of sugar history. Mintz laid the groundwork for much of food history written after his study.

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