

# Academic OneFile Review

## Sweet Treats around the World: An Encyclopedia of Food and Culture

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Sweet Treats around the World: An Encyclopedia of Food and Culture. By Timothy G. Roufs and Kathleen S. Roufs. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2014. 623 pages. Acid free. \$100 (ISBN: 978-1-61069-220-5). Ebook available (978-1-61069-221-2).

What do Torments of Love, Lady's Upper Arms, Sigh of a Lima Woman, and Little Spiders have in common? They are all sweet treats featured in this encyclopedia authored by the Roufs. Timothy Roufs is a cultural anthropologist who teaches food-related courses at the University of Minnesota, Duluth while Kathleen Roufs is emeritus director of advising and retention at the same university. The preface states that the volume "explores this myriad feast of sweets with an emphasis on an anthropological approach that focuses on foods in a holistic, historical, and comparative manner" (xix). The introduction goes into detail about humans' love for sugar, fat, and salt. The types of sugar are described such as fructose, sucrose, and glucose as well as artificial sweeteners such as aspartame and saccharin. The authors outline the history of sugar sources from chocolate to sugarcane to honey. The introduction ends with the prospect

of creating sweet treats with a 3-D printer filled with cartridges of marzipan, chocolate, and other pastes.

The book starts out with a list of entries of countries in alphabetical order. Many countries are grouped together by region. For example, Southeast Asia includes Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam while the Horn of Africa is made up of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. After the entries comes an index of recipes for sample sweets from each country or region.

The articles are arranged alphabetically from "Afghanistan" to "West Africa" and range in length from a few paragraphs to several pages. The articles all start with a very brief introduction to the history and facts of the country and end with a list of further readings. The first line to the entry on "Switzerland" is "Milk, Chocolate, Swiss." The Swiss consume about half of what they produce in chocolate. The word sugar comes from the Indian Sanskrit sarkara, meaning gravel or sand. Dates, figs, honey, and nuts are important in Middle Eastern cultures. Fresh fruit is the dessert of choice in most of Africa. Some countries only eat sweets for religious holidays. There is a Thai Dessert Museum in central Thailand that chronicles the seven-hundred-year history of sweet stuff. The reader's mouth will be watering as sweet after sweet is described.

The listing of readings includes articles, books, and websites. Within articles are insets of photographs with captions or terms with definitions. The authors were not able to go into depth about sweets in each country but do a nice job of giving the reader a taste of each country's cultural food.

There are more than two hundred recipes at the end of the volume, followed by an extensive index. A fun read that is appropriate for public libraries and those libraries with food-related collections.--Stacey Marien, Acquisitions Librarian, American University, Washington, DC

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