



Vanilla: The Cultural History of the World's Favorite Flavor and Fragrance

Patricia Rain

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It has seduced kings and comforted millions. Part culinary history, part cultural commentary, Vanilla tells the remarkable story of the world's most popular flavor and scent.

The Spanish considered vanilla the ultimate aphrodisiac, the Totonac Indians called it the fruit of the gods, and the Aztecs taxed the Mayans in vanilla beans, using the beans as currency. Today, vanilla is in our coffee, our perfume, tea, home products, body lotion, and just about anything imaginable.

Patricia Rain explores the incredibly diverse effect of vanilla on the worlds of food, medicine, psychology, and even politics. She intertwines the fields of cultural anthropology, botany, folklore, and economics, tracing the marvelous path of vanilla throughout world history. Vanilla shows how the impact and marketing of this ubiquitous little bean over the last eight hundred years saved the indigenous peoples of Mexico and Tahiti, put Madagascar on the map, drove the success of the great Parisian perfume houses and Europe's confection industry, and spurred trade routes across the Indian Ocean. Rain examines the rich history of vanilla with exacting detail and discusses its current role in our lives and the modern retail world, where the "vanilla boom" has caused the prices of many common consumer items to skyrocket.

Filled with fascinating insights, quirky characters, trivia, and even recipes, this beautifully written book is perfect for vanilla lovers, history buffs, and anyone interested in a real-life captivating story.

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